

LUMINOUS LEGACY



PYG

Progressive Art Gallery



रजा फाउण्डेशन | THE RAZA FOUNDATION

Participating Artists

SAYED HAIDER RAZA

•

FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA

•

KRISHNAJI HOWLAJI ARA

•

SADANAND K. BAKRE

•

MAQBOOL FIDA HUSAIN

•

HARI AMBADAS GADE

LUMINOUS LEGACY

CELEBRATING



of

PROGRESSIVE ARTISTS GROUP

Conceptualized by

DR. GEETI SEN



of

PYG

Progressive Art Gallery

LUMINOUS LEGACY



Progressive Art Gallery

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Front cover image: **Maqbool Fida Husain | UNTITLED** | Oil on canvas | 42 x 44 inches | 1950's

Foreword Note:

Nearly seventy-five years ago when some young and thinking artists came together to form the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay to seek and articulate a new poetic of art, to make it new in an India about to attain freedom from colonial rule and on the cusp of soon becoming a democratic republic. These artists came from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, etc. they were Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Dalit. In a manner, their plurality of background, upbringing, and dreams and anxieties represented the plurality of India. Plurality was under great strain due to the partition of the country but the country wisely chose to reaffirm and nurture it in the constitution which was to be coming into force in 1950.

The PAG had a plural vision of art: it accommodated different styles, idioms, art practice and aesthetic approaches. It, however, pitched itself against the dominant academism of the colonial ethos and the sentimental harp back to India's past. It sought to bring together modernism, open and vulnerable; modernism which would imbibe other influences and yet seek an indigenous poetics.

The eminent art historian and critic Dr. Geeti Sen has very insightfully looked at the role, the path breaking role of the PAG as well the artistic individuality of each of the six artists whose works are shown in this exhibition.

No other group in the history of Modern Indian Art has produced such a huge galaxy of masters as did the PAG, however short-lived it actually was. The founding artists and the later joining artists have dominated the art scene of India for more than half a century.

The PAG artists moved in many different directions. They were walkers, however, on 'the road not taken'. From landscapes and cityscapes to inscapes, from color to concept, from narration to abstraction, from still life to vibrant active life, from emotions to ideas the artists covered a wide range of life, reality and art. The show is a modest attempt to underline their continuing presence and relevance.

Ashok Vajpeyi

Managing Trustee

The Raza Foundation



The Founding Members of PAG - front row: F.N. Souza, K.H. Ara and H.A. Gade, back row: M.F. Husain, S.K. Bakre and S.H. Raza



Director's Note:

It is with great pleasure and a sense of immense pride that I extend a warm welcome to all of you on behalf of Progressive Art Gallery. This marks a significant milestone in our journey as we celebrate the silver jubilee of our gallery and the golden jubilee of the esteemed Progressive Artist Group in the same year.

For the past 25 years, Progressive Art Gallery has been a hub for creativity, innovation, and artistic expression. We have strived to provide a platform for both established and emerging artists to showcase their exceptional talents and push the boundaries of contemporary art. It is our honor to have been able to contribute to the growth and recognition of countless talented artists over the years.

As we embark on this momentous occasion, we are honored to collaborate with two prestigious organizations that have made monumental contributions to the world of art and culture. The Raza Foundation and Triveni Kala Sangam have been pillars of support for artists, fostering their growth and nurturing their creative endeavors. Together, we aim to create an unforgettable experience that celebrates the rich legacy of the Progressive Artist Group and the remarkable journey of the Progressive Art Gallery.

The opening exhibition, which is a culmination of months of meticulous planning and curation, will showcase the works of the iconic members of the Progressive Artist Group - M F Husain, S H Raza, F N Souza, K H Ara, H A Gade, and S K Bakre. Their artistic prowess and contributions to the Indian art scene have left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of our nation and beyond. This exhibition will not only be a tribute to their genius but also a testament to the enduring power of art to transcend boundaries and captivate our hearts.

In addition to the exhibition, we have curated a series of events and programs that will immerse you in the world of art, fostering dialogue, inspiration, and appreciation. We have invited renowned art critics, scholars, and connoisseurs to share their insights through panel discussions and talks. There will also be interactive workshops and live demonstrations by talented artists, allowing visitors to engage with the creative process first-hand.

As we gather here to celebrate this momentous occasion, let us reflect on the profound impact art has on our lives. It has the ability to ignite our imagination, challenge our perspectives, and create connections that transcend cultural and societal boundaries. Through the collective efforts of the Progressive Artist Group, Progressive Art Gallery, The Raza Foundation, and Triveni Kala Sangam, we hope to continue fostering a vibrant and inclusive art community that nourishes the spirit and enriches lives.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our patrons, artists, collaborators, and well-wishers who have supported us throughout this remarkable journey. Your unwavering belief in our mission has been the driving force behind our success. Together, let us embrace this jubilant occasion as a celebration of art, creativity, and the enduring spirit of human expression.

Warm regards,

Harsh Vardhan Singh
Director, Progressive Art Gallery



The Bombay Progressive Artists: A Celebration

Twenty-five years is a time to celebrate in the life of an art gallery. The Progressive Art Gallery does this with an exhibition of its collection on the Progressive Artists, from whom it takes its name. The artists include Maqbool Fida Husain, Sayed Haider Raza, Francis Newton Souza, Krishnaji Howlaji Ara, Sadanand K. Bakre, and Hari Ambadas Gade.

Rare works are to be seen from the early years of these six painters, as they experimented to forge their distinct styles and to achieve maturity. They held their first exhibition together in 1949, soon after India gained independence. Raza caught the impassioned fervor of this eventful time by saying:

We could move mountains! We were in the process of becoming ourselves!

Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, the renowned dramatist and actor, describes the day of Independence when he joined a massive procession in Bombay:

There was too much excitement. All Bombay was at Gowalia Tank maidan and at last the procession started. There must have been a million people in the three-mile procession. I never saw the whole of it. I was not an island. I was a drop in the ocean and I wondered if a drop can see the ocean as a whole.

I was one of a million performers in the greatest drama of our century, and was I proud of this moment!

Many who lived through those critical years might have felt the same sense of apprehension in the forging of a new destiny. It was inevitable that this mood and the idealism would affect the artists as well—to aspire in the new-found freedom to found a ‘modern’ language in art. The six who came together to form the Progressive Artists included Hindus, two Muslims and one Christian. Despite dramatic differences in their social backgrounds and temperament, they were building on this climate of thought to create a secular and “free” India.

The Progressives held their first exhibition in Baroda and subsequently in the same year on 7 July 1949 in Bombay. Souza, being the most articulate, wrote the Manifesto for this exhibition. It is worth quoting, in its compelling language and mastery in words. It asserts the idea of “absolute freedom” which is described above in the previous three paragraphs.

Today we paint with absolute freedom for content and technique Almost anarchic; save that we are governed by one to two sound Elemental laws of aesthetic order,

◀ Sayed Haider Raza

PORTRAIT

Oil on paper
19 x 14 inches
1941

plastic coordination and color Composition. We have no pretension of making vapid revivals of Any school or movement in art. We have studied the various Schools of painting and sculpture to arrive at a vigorous synthesis.

From the Catalogue of the PAG Exhibition, 7 July 1949

Quoted in Sen, Bindu: Space and Time in Raza's Vision, 1997, p. 47.

The exhibition caused a furor in Bombay, much controversy and comment. The art critic Rudy von Leyden reviewed the show in the Times of India, showing his support and appreciation.

The six artists, Ara, sculptor Bakre, Gade, Husain, Raza and Souza (generally known as Newton) have formed distinct group in spite of very different artistic approaches and temper. They are not satisfied with the ready-made conventions either of the academic Western or the academic traditional schools. In the words of Samuel Butler which they have set as a motto for the exhibition, 'young art must be working out its own salvation from efforts in all fear and trembling'...Those who have followed the works of these artists over the past years will know of the struggles, the experiments, the trials that lie behind the considerable achievement which this exhibition represents.

Rudy von Leyden, review in the Times of India, July 1949.

Souza was a born rebel. He was expelled from the J.J. School of Art for taking part in a demonstration against anti-nationalist practices of the British. Earlier he had been expelled from St. Xavier's school, for making pornographic drawings in the lavatory. The domination of the human figure in his work gives them an intense power. Though he was a master at drawing, his figures are almost three-dimensional. Like Picasso, he could lop off an eye and place it on the forehead, or open the lips of a face to a growl, put bared fangs instead of teeth. At times and once in the depiction of the *Crucifixion*, he might introduce four arms in place of two.

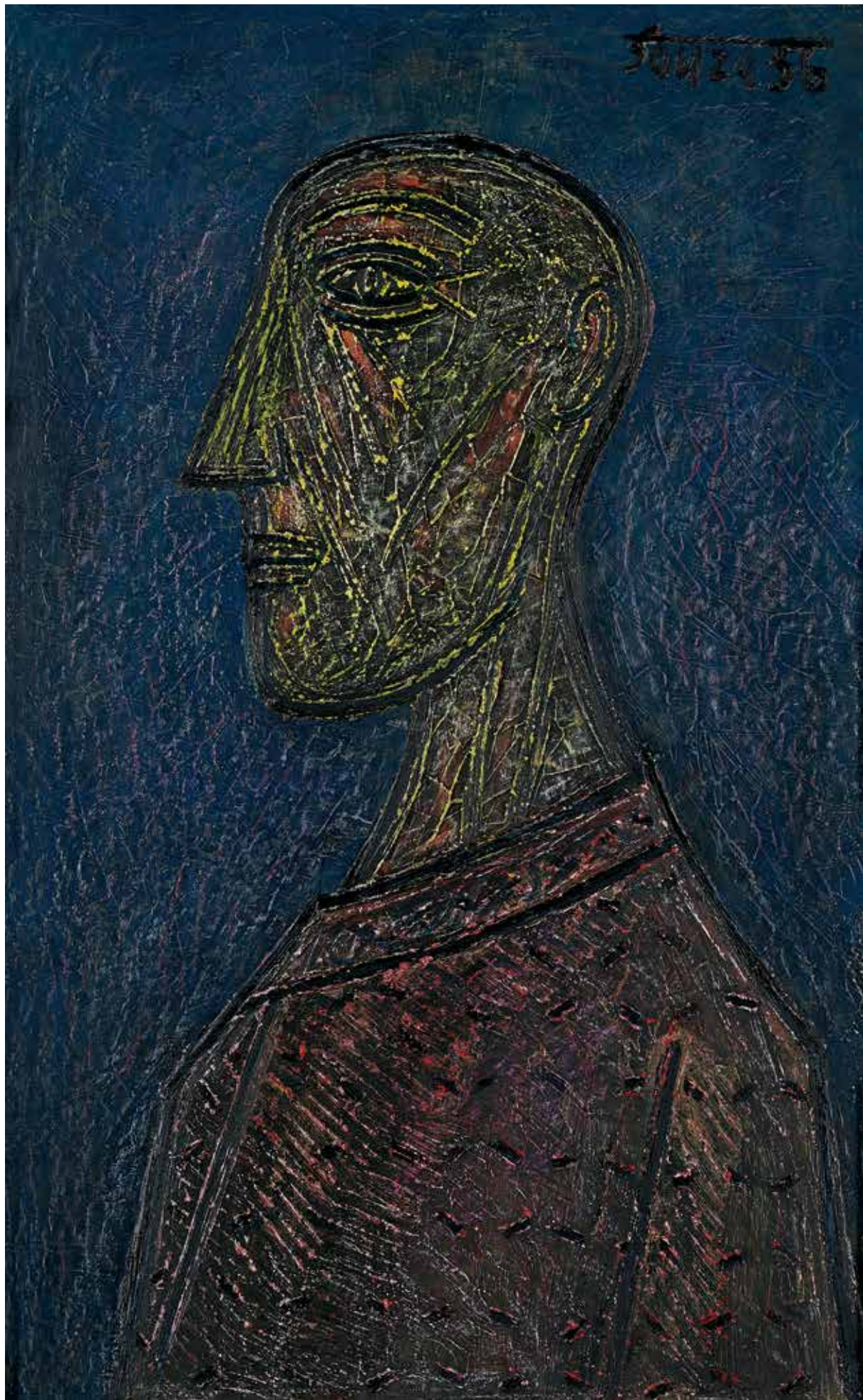
Before he left for England Souza painted a number of picture of life in Goa, where he signed himself simply as 'Newton'. *Goan Peasants in the Market* dated to 1944 is a colorful image from this time, in representing his early work. It vibrates with tones of red and yellow, and is remarkably evocative. If we were to compare this with his *Untitled* painting of 1964, (also referred to as Hampstead Terraces) the difference in treatment is dramatic. The ground

Francis Newton ►
Souza

UNTITLED
Oil on paper
27 x 20 inches
1956

Souza 56





Francis Newton
Souza

PROFILE OF A MAN

Oil on board
39 x 24 inches
1956

color here of red bristles with a sense of unreleased violence, enhanced by the outlines of houses in black and white. This is a townscape which breathes with fire. On the upper right of the painting is scrawled the name of Souza 64.

The influence of the church had a profound impact on Souza – although his interpretation of it was far from conventional. Several of his paintings are of the Pieta, and they are savage and terrifying, subverting the theme from its Christian religiosity. His *Church* of 1957 in this collection is dark and poignant. As he writes in his book published in London in 1952, *Words & Lines*,

The Roman Catholic Church had a tremendous influence over me, not its dogmas but its grand architecture and the splendor of its services... The enormous crucifix with the impaled image of a Man supposed to be the Son of God, scourged and dripping, with matted hair tangled in plaited thorns. I would kneel and pray for hours... I felt I had paid an installment for the salvation of my soul.

F.N. Souza, *Words & Lines*, first published by Villiers Publication Ltd, London, England, July 1959, reprinted in second edition by Nitin Bhayana Publishing, Media TransAsia, New Delhi, 1997.

Most of all, Souza will be remembered for his depictions of the female figure. Seldom as seen here is the woman bared of all embellishments. Here we would like to recall John Berger's distinction between the body as being seen to be 'naked' rather than the classical formula of her being viewed as a 'nude'. (John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p. 54). Souza's glorious depiction of the naked body in an *Untitled* work of 1989 is also described as 'Souza with his Muse'. The painting commands the viewer to focus on her massive figure, with the subservient figure of the man who is possibly the artist himself. This image is a testimony to Souza's powerful depiction of the human body.

Among the six artists, Souza alone was a master of words as well as of painting. In his early years in England he was fortunate to meet the celebrated poet, Stephen Spender, who published his book in 1952, *Words & Lines*. This publication did much to establish Souza's reputation as a writer in the UK – many years before he became known as an artist. In this book are passages which enrich our understanding of Souza as an artist, and indeed how he looked upon painting. Not as an object expressing beauty, but instead it becomes a process

of self discovery. He writes for instance about himself in these words:

When I begin to paint I am wrapped in myself, rapt; unaware of chromium cars and decollete debutantes, wrapped like a foetus in the womb, only aware that each painting for me is either a milestone or a tombstone... When I press a tube, I coil. Every brush stroke makes me recoil like a snake struck with a stick. I hate the smell of paint. Painting for me is not beautiful. It is as ugly as a reptile. I attack it. It coils and recoils making fascinating patterns...

Quoted from *F. N. Souza, Words & Lines, pp. 10-11*

M.F. Husain lived a life which fascinates us in its contradictions, compromise, courage. Aged ninety-three in 2007 when I last met him, he stood tall, commanding attention and controversy. Age had not diminished his energy. He would walk out of his apartment in Mayfair, a tall lean figure in a black sherwani striding ahead of us, barefoot – to swing into the plush carpets of the Dorchester Hotel in London. Living in self-exile from 2006 in London and Dubai, he would drive his Phantom Rolls Royce to Hyde Park and steer a red Ferrari car in Dubai. He was living in exile as he had been attacked in India with threats on his life.

Fakir, nomad, lover, poet, dreamer, artist, film-maker, stuntman, adventurer – he became them all with ease. His reach was far, striving for the impossible. His description of his own work says it all:

*As I begin to paint, hold the Sky in your hands
As the stretch of my canvas is unknown to me.*

How do we explain the enigma of a man from modest beginnings, whose father had apprenticed him to assist a tailor – who then broke away from this destiny to become one of India's greatest artists? He left Indore to begin his career in Bombay, by working on cinema hoardings that were 25 feet to 60 feet in size. He painted them at night on the rail tracks of Grant Road, timed between the last local train arriving at 1 am and the first train which left at 5 am in the morning. He worked also in a toyshop. (Toy series 1942)

Unlike other members of the PAG who lived and painted abroad such as Souza and Raza, Husain remained rooted to the Indian environment. His essential concern was to evolve a metaphor for the myriad realities which composed the country. This metaphor grew into the earthy, rural themes in a painting titled *Zameen* (1955). With men working on the land,

Maqbool Fida ►
Husain

UNTITLED
Dry pastel on paper
11 x 8 inches
1980



Husain



a woman churning butter, bulls and bullock carts, it evoked the quintessence of India. This painting won the National Award, and after considerable debate it was purchased by the Lalit Kala Akademi.

Husain's vision was vast, with figures cutting across communities, race and caste. He was as familiar with the enactment of the Ramlila as with the tazia processions of the Shiah in Indore. The magic and spectacle of religious festivity had burned into his psyche – why would he not espouse these from both religions? For him there was no conflict in that he described as India's unique 'composite culture'. When he was singled out for the privilege of representing India at the Sao Paolo Bienale in 1972, he chose to create fourteen canvases from the Mahabharata.

To cover the expanse of his vision we could turn to his "horses like lightning, (who) cut across many horizons ..." This powerful expression by Husain was inspired from different civilizations across the world, as he expressed it: "from the battlefield of Karbala to Bankura terracottas; from the Chinese Tse pei Hung horse (which he had seen on his visit to China in 1952) to the horses at San Marco in Italy, from the ornately armoured Duldul to the challenging white of the Aswamedh". Husain had remarked on this extraordinary range on one theme, commenting that "the cavalcade of my horse(s) is multidimensional". (*Horses*, 1960s and *Equus*, 1979.)

In 1980 Husain paid a visit to the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta. He became obsessed with *Mother Teresa*, this frail, indomitable woman who rescued the poor, the weak and the dying off the streets of Calcutta. Not one but a series of paintings emerged in the 1980s of Mother Teresa, in single frame, diptychs and triptychs. The mother with an orphaned child was linked to his personal history of losing his own mother when he was two years old. The hands of mother Teresa define the only movement in her monumental presence. Her face, haloed by the blue border of her sari, remains permanently in shadow.

He referred to his paintings as 'metaphor'. His antenna was tuned into capturing the cultural phenomena of the Indian civilization, not the precise moment. In a very different mood he painted a series of water color paintings on the British Raj. He exposed not only the exploits of the British in India but also how the middle class in India began to imitate their life style. One of this series in the Progressive Art Gallery is *Princess Nisha Raje: Afternoon Tea with Lady Mcbull*, 1997.

◀ **Maqbool Fida
Husain**

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
50 x 36 inches
1980

For Husain, cinema expressed the ultimate reality. He had begun his career in Bombay in 1937 with painting film posters. He worked for the *New Theatre*, creating a bill board the celebrated actress with Durga Khote spanning forty feet. He was so mesmerized by Saigal's depiction of *Devdas* that he saw the film seven times. When he scripted his own film *Gaja Gamani* starring Madhuri Dixit, he cast her to play five different roles of women. Not surprisingly, he painted a whole series on *Madhuri Dixit*.

In a different mood altogether is *The Last Supper* painted in the year 2005. From the bible he selected this theme alone on Christ, and he painted the scene several times. This is an eloquent painting, a testimony to Husain's vast vision which spanned every religion and culture in India.

Sadanand Bakre was trained and emerged from a strong realist tradition in sculpture. He made some remarkable portraits, including one of Sir Cowasji Jehangir who was the main sponsor of the Jehangir art gallery in Bombay. After living several years in London and Paris, he lived his last decades in Murud-Harnai, a remote place in the rugged Konkan coast of Maharashtra.

Bakre made his mark at an exhibition in March 1951 at the Bombay Art Society. From the earnings of the sale of a painting he booked his passage to London. There in London he met some outstanding sculptors such as Henry Moore and Jacob Epstein, and he was certainly influenced by their work. Bakre's work formed a critical link between the old realist school and the modernism which was being created.

His explorations in painting reflect his experience of sculpture. They introduce a three-dimensional quality to his depictions of bottles and mugs and trays. His *Still Life* in 1964 vibrates in different shapes of bottles in blue, white and red, including the chequered pattern in black and white of the floor below the table. Speaking about his own work, he made observations which are relevant and worth quoting here.

I paint as I like. It is a compelling passion with me to keep alive and I cannot help painting and sculpting. I am traditionally trained and perfectly capable of accomplishing realistic work. But my interest in forms has gone far beyond the dull imitations of subject matter, which to me is almost unimportant...

(Quoted by Yasodhara Dalmia, *The Making of Modern Indian Art*,
The Progressives, p. 186)



Sadanand
K. Bakre

UNTITLED

Oil on masonite board
36 x 24 inches
1959



These observations become very relevant when looking at his untitled work of 1963/64. On first impression this appears to a townscape, with vertical blocks of buildings thrusting upwards. Superimposed over these blocks are the trunks and branches of trees without leaves, as they would appear in winter. As he mentions in the passage quoted above, in his explorations in this work he has gone beyond “the dull imitations of subject matter”. Bakre is exploring instead the possibilities of paint, of color and of textures – freed in every sense of any theme. The ambiguity in this painting intrigues and holds the viewer’s interest, imparting to it different layers of interpretation.

K.H. Ara made a dramatic entry into the art world in the 1940s. His lack of formal training in art can be seen as an advantage, for he painted without any academic restraints. His paintings were raw and impassioned, fused with buoyancy and unrelenting commitment. Yet all through his life he lived in a small servant’s quarter, a 10 feet by 10 feet room at Walkeshwar which doubled as his studio.

Jagmohan, an art critic of the time, wrote about his first meeting with Ara:

For me Ara’s evolution as a painter was like a flowering plant that manages to shoot out from under the boulders to tantalize us with its colors.. he emerged as a self-taught painter who had dazzled the eyes of innumerable people with his colorful, imaginative, expressionistic paintings...

Ara’s pictures were based on human situations and everyday life. Tremendous vitality is found in these studies in the collection of the Progressive art gallery, in his landscape and his studies of performing dancers. His landscape introduces a road winding up through fields and mountains and sky, opening up into a vast vision. Ara’s evocative study of the dancer is remarkable: her arms and her skirt and her dupatta fan out to convey the feverish rhythm of her movement. The tempo finds resonance in the movement of musicians in the foreground of this picture. In another painting the musician dances with the instrument held in his hand, both he and his accompanist dancing with their feet dancing off the ground. In another small study four women are dancing with their backs to the viewer, dazzling in their saris of red, yellow, blue and green. They are not voluptuous; but the range of colors and the rhythmic movement of their torsos create a tempo of dynamic movement which is unique to Ara.

◀ Krishnaji Howlaji
Ara

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
30 x 22 inches
1960’s

In 1930 Ara was part of Gandhi's march during the Salt Satyagraha, and he was drawn into the movement for India's independence. He was arrested and jailed for five months, but then released. Free but jobless, he took a job to wash cars for Rs. 18 per month, and he painted in his spare time. Rudy von Leyden, the art director of the *Times of India*, detected signs of talent in the young artist, and became his strongest supporter. As Ara was jobless, Leyden offered him a small stipend that looked after his expenses so that he was left free to paint. In 1942 Ara held his first one-man show at the Chetana restaurant at Rampart Row in Bombay. He sold all his paintings at a total sum of two thousand rupees, and took the money to Leyden to pay off his debt. Leyden refused to accept it, and told Ara that from then onwards he would be on his own as a painter.

H.A. Gade came from a distinctly different background. He graduated from Nagpur University, and went on to teach mathematics at the same university. Enrolling as a casual student at the Nagpur School of Art, he developed a lifelong friendship with the artist Raza. In 1948 his painting titled *Omkareshwar* won a silver medal at an exhibition of the Bombay Art Society, and he was invited to join the Progressive Artists Group. This was a turning point in his artistic career for as he observed, "I came to know about modern art after joining the Progressive Artists Group."

Gade's compositions focus on houses, often without habitation, from towns of Udaipur, Nasik, Omkareshwar. The juxtaposition of colors and the alignment of these grid-like houses move towards abstraction and are untitled, as in his painting from the 1970s in muted tones of beige and browns. He avoided figurative painting which entailed emotions. As he stated:

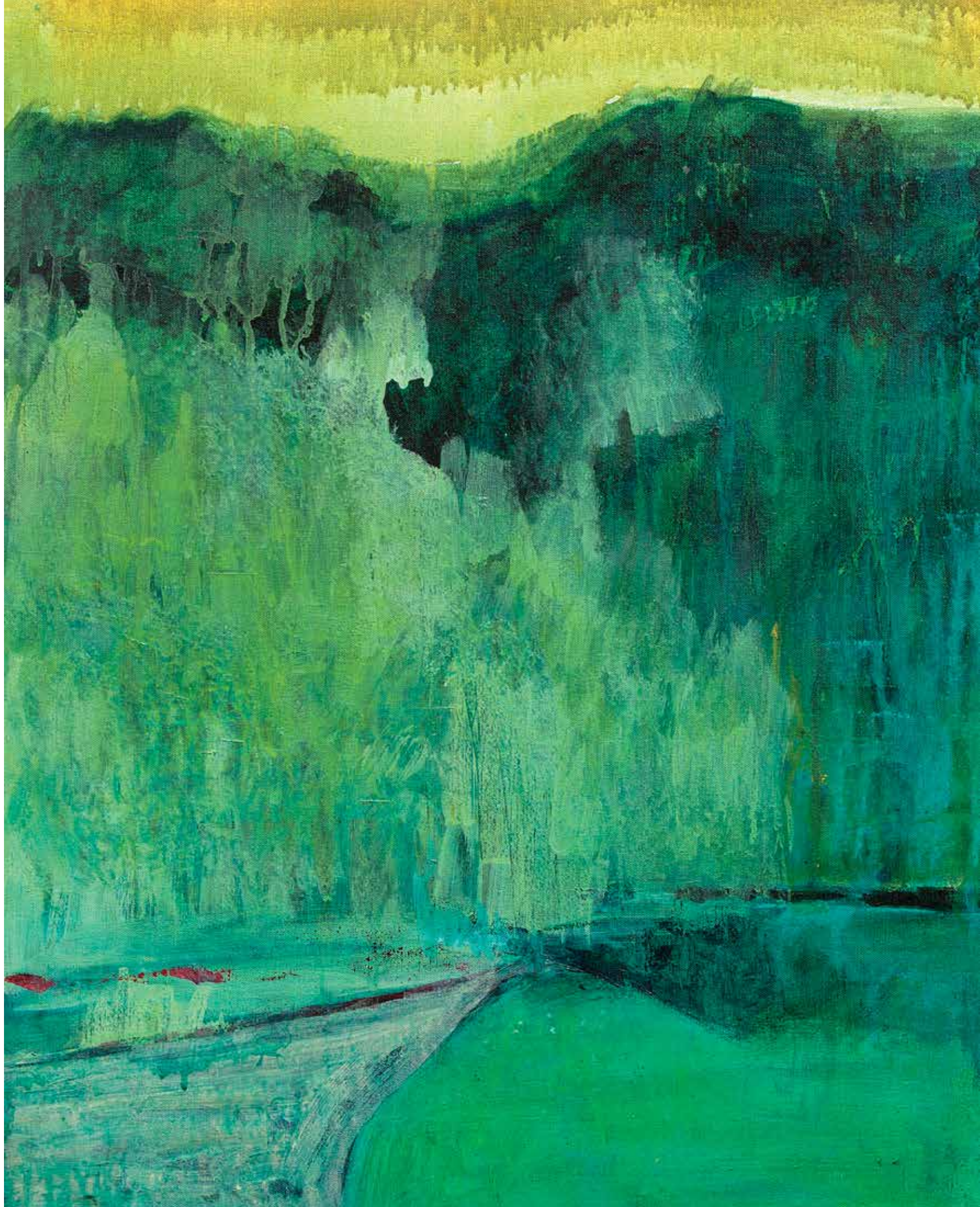
I know people only as shapes. A human being or a tree for me is a color area, nothing else because I dislike illustration. An illustration is not a modern painting and I avoid it. Not that I have not done figures but for me they are important only to the extent that they formulate certain aesthetic relationships.

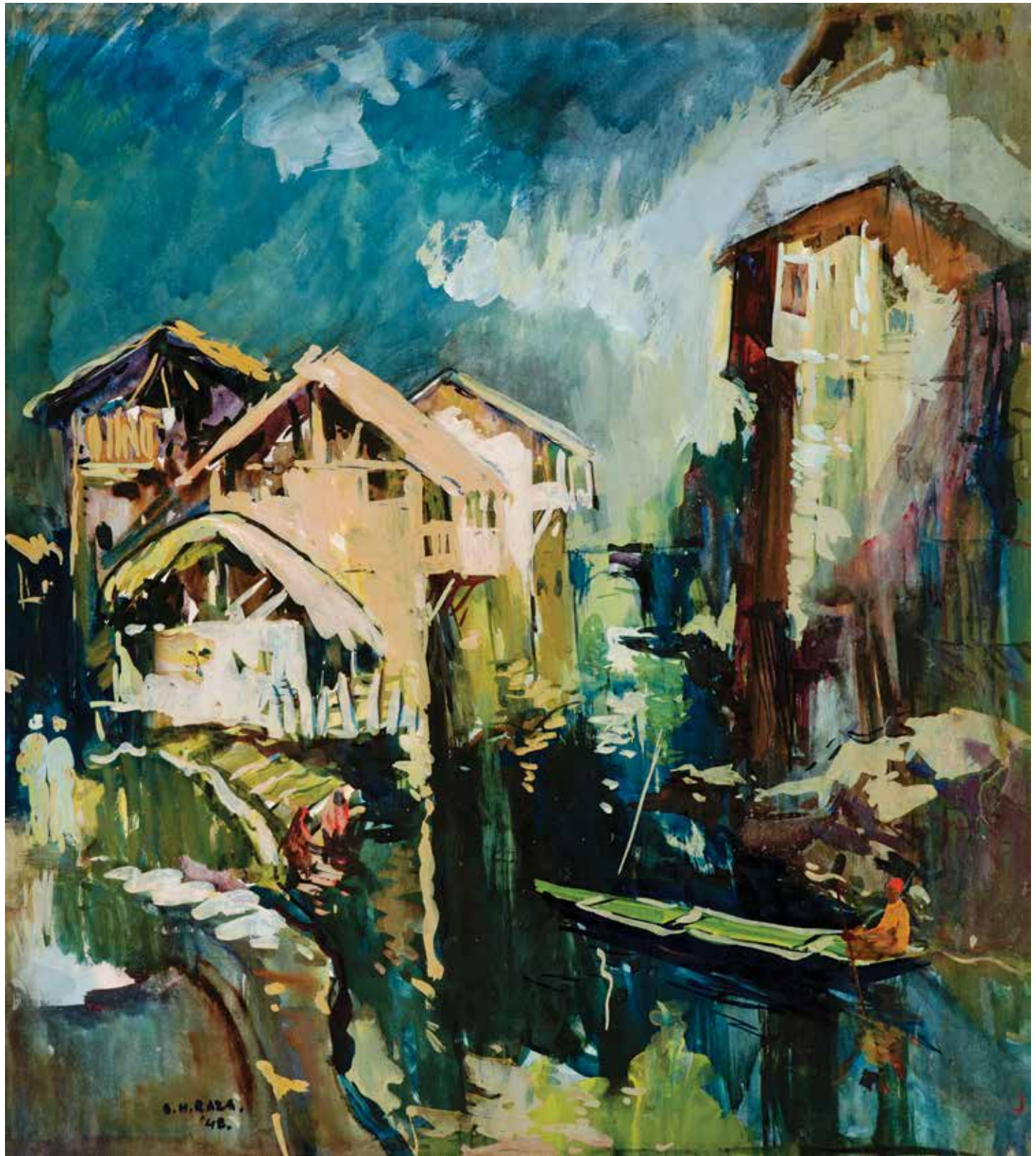
Raza's paintings grew out of his environment. Unlike other artists of the PAG he always painted landscapes; although over the years his vocabulary changed dramatically, and the images were gradually transformed into abstractions.

Born as the son of a forest warden, he was attuned to living the rhythm of the forests in Madhya Pradesh. In a painting of the 1940s he creates this environment. His landscape of the

Hari Ambadas
Gade ▶

UNTITLED
Oil on canvas
30 x 24 inches
1970's





SRINAGAR
Gouche on paper
21 x 19 inches
1948

Sayed Haider Raza

Gol Gummad in 1943 is deeply influenced by European art, introducing Islamic domes and turrets in tranquil blues and cream. On receiving an invitation from Sheikh Abdullah Raza visited Kashmir in 1948, along with writers such as Khaja Ahmed Abbas and actor Balraj Sahni. Raza painted the boats and bridges and bazaars of Srinagar; but also, he painted the charred ruins of Baramulla. His *Kashmir paintings* are turbulent, when compared with his painting of the Gol Gummad which was done just five years earlier.

In 1950 Raza left India for France, where he lived for more than fifty years. The memories of India with its vibrant colors came vividly alive in his canvases. He visited galleries and museums, to understand the structure of Cezanne's work and the use of Van Gogh's raw, emotive colors. He painted the villages of France in a strange, unfamiliar language which drew comments from French critics. His *Village of 1956* surfaces with houses aligned diagonally, black and white against a muddy yellow background. No breath of air stirs, no sound breaks through the silence. Several paintings of this decade such as *La Provence Noire* in 1965 and *The Invisible Cross* in 1970 and *La Source* in 1972 are moving towards abstract painting. Certainly, his visit to California in 1962 had exposed him to appreciate and be influenced by the raw abstraction of American artists.

Day Raga in 1962 is a milestone in his evolution. This exquisite work is the earliest known expression of Raza's abiding interest in Indian classical music. From 1959 Raza was returning to rediscover India, with his wife Janine. Raga derives from the Sanskrit word *ranja* meaning to color – to inflame the mind with an emotive response. The melody of a raga transforms into a visual image. Another untitled work of 1976 is created in bold strokes of red, and it is 'framed' by borders on all four sides, as found in Indian miniature painting. His vision had awakened to find inspiration from miniature painting.

In an untitled work of 1979 in this collection the black Bindu surfaces, placed in the center of the painting. It surfaces with absolute clarity of vision as a magnetic force which compels our attention. From the 1980s he created large paintings which are titled *Earth* in 1982, *La Terre* in 1984 and *Green Earth* in 1984. In *Bhoomi* of 1987 the bindu appears like a lode star, a dense black circle poised between diagonal and horizontal forces. Memory, the power of recall, sifts out the Bindu and enshrines it like an icon.

In my discussions with him held in France in 1989 and 1990, Raza charts out his experience and experiments with the bindu, and its multiple meanings.

For me at initial stage, bindu not only represented the primordial symbol or the seed. It also represented for me a point which could be enlarged to a circle – one of the most significant geometrical forms.

Immense energy and potential was released by a simple yet essential form. It opened up a whole new vocabulary which corresponded, in a sense, to my training in Paris in formalism.

The first painting realized was a dark black bindu with grey and white radiation around – in a square frame. In the centre of the circle was a vertical and horizontal line.

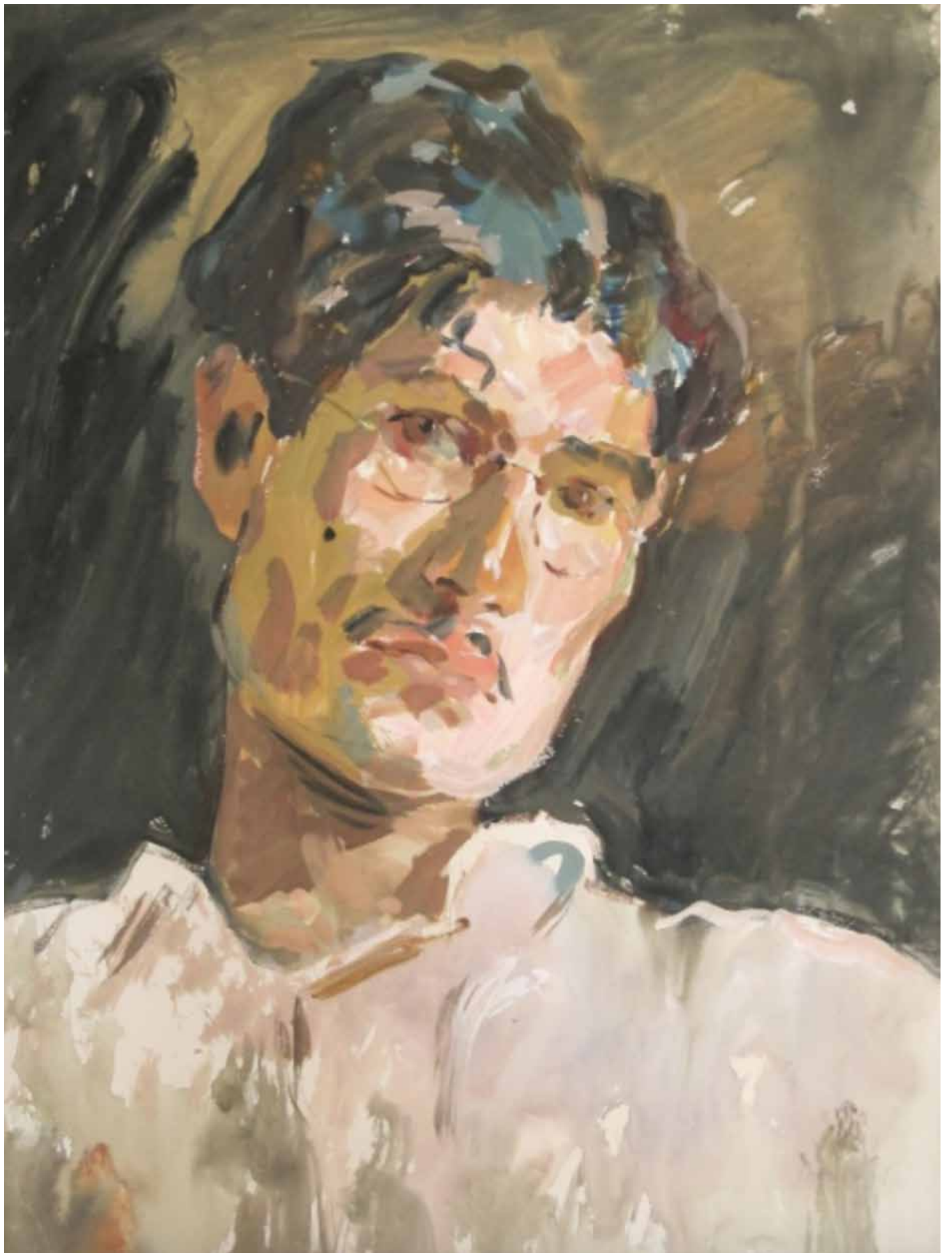
Raza offers no apologies for the repetition of the Bindu as it explores the infinite possibilities of the universe. It could be titled as it is here in these images as *Ankuran* in 1987 or *Naga* in 1989, or *Param Bindu* in 1991 or *Bindu Nad* in 1994. Searching for his roots while living in Europe, his images had coalesced into a metaphor. In the best tradition of symbiosis, Raza began to create images which go far beyond his early landscapes – to possess a symbolic and universal meaning.

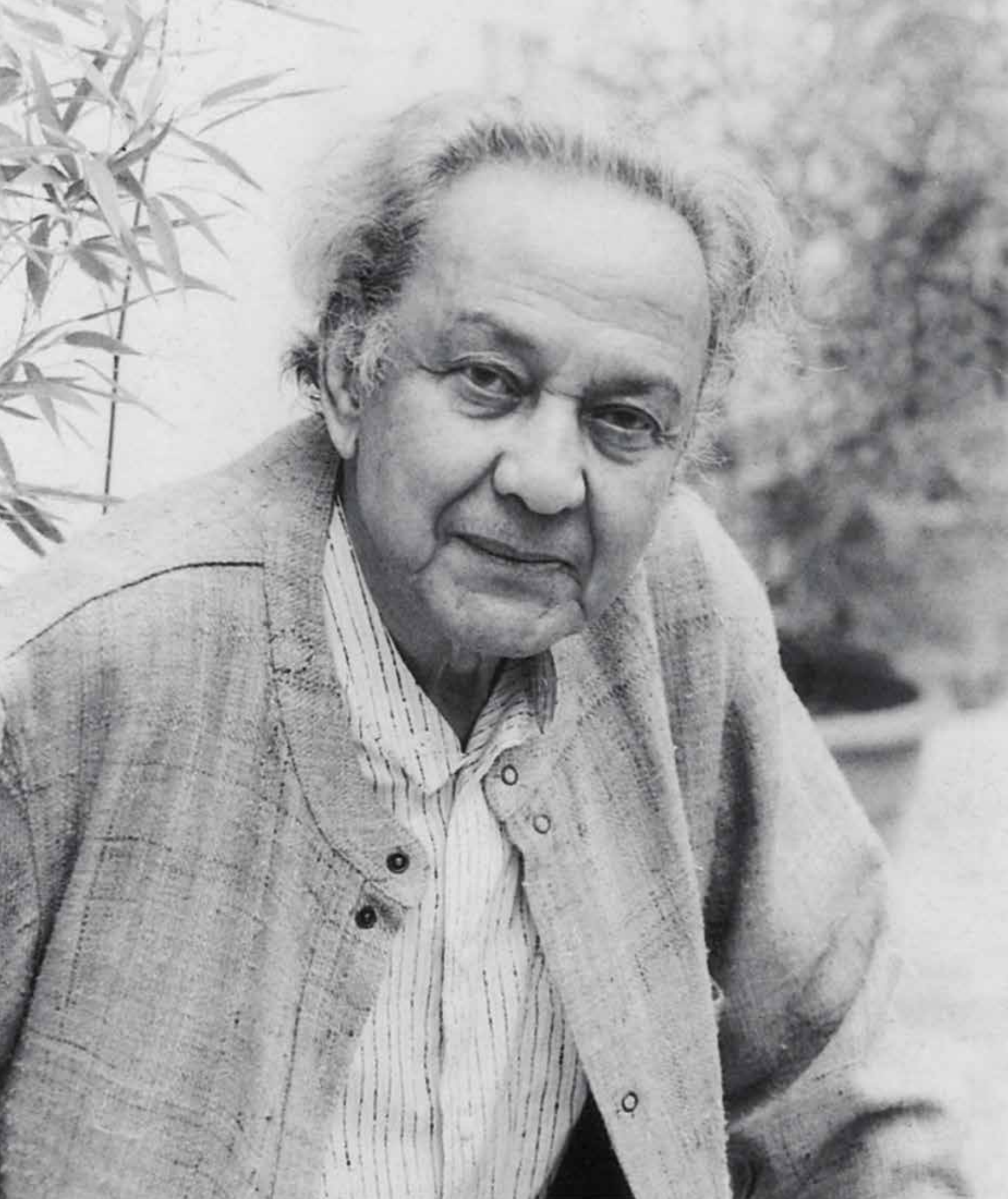
From Souza's brutal and occasionally poignant images to Husain's expansive vision cutting across castes and community, from the rhythm of Ara's raw, intuitive and unrestrained figures to Gade's controlled abstractions, from Bakre's experiments with texture to Raza's metaphors of the Bindu, we travel great distances in painting. Immense differences existed in the explorations by these artists. Yet by coming together to form the Bombay Progressives they created a modern language in art.

Dr. Geeti Sen

Sayed Haider ►
Raza

UNTITLED
Watercolor on paper
18 x 14 inches
1940's





SAYED HAIDER RAZA

(February 1922 – July 2016)

Syed Haider Raza, known as S.H. Raza, was a prominent Indian modern artist whose work combined elements of Indian spirituality and European modernism. Born in 1922 in Kakaiya, Madhya Pradesh, Raza's artistic journey spanned several continents and decades, making him a globally renowned figure in the art world.

Raza's early works were influenced by the landscapes of his childhood in India. He often depicted the vibrant colors and serene atmospheres of rural landscapes, showcasing his deep connection to the natural beauty of the country. Over time, his style evolved, incorporating geometric shapes and symbols inspired by Indian spirituality, particularly the bindu, a dot that represents the divine energy.

In the 1950s, Raza moved to France, where he became part of the influential art movement known as the Ecole de Paris. This exposure to European modernism influenced his artistic approach, leading to a fusion of Indian and Western artistic techniques. His use of bold colors and abstract forms reflected his exploration of concepts such as space, time, and the relationship between humanity and nature.

Raza's art was characterized by his unique and powerful use of color. He developed a signature palette, often employing vivid primary colors to create a sense of energy and vibrancy in his paintings. His artworks embodied a deep sense of spirituality and contemplation, inviting viewers to reflect on the harmony and interconnectedness of the universe.

Throughout his career, Raza received numerous accolades, including the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, two of India's highest civilian honors. His paintings were exhibited in prestigious galleries and museums worldwide, garnering critical acclaim and admiration for their aesthetic and philosophical depth.

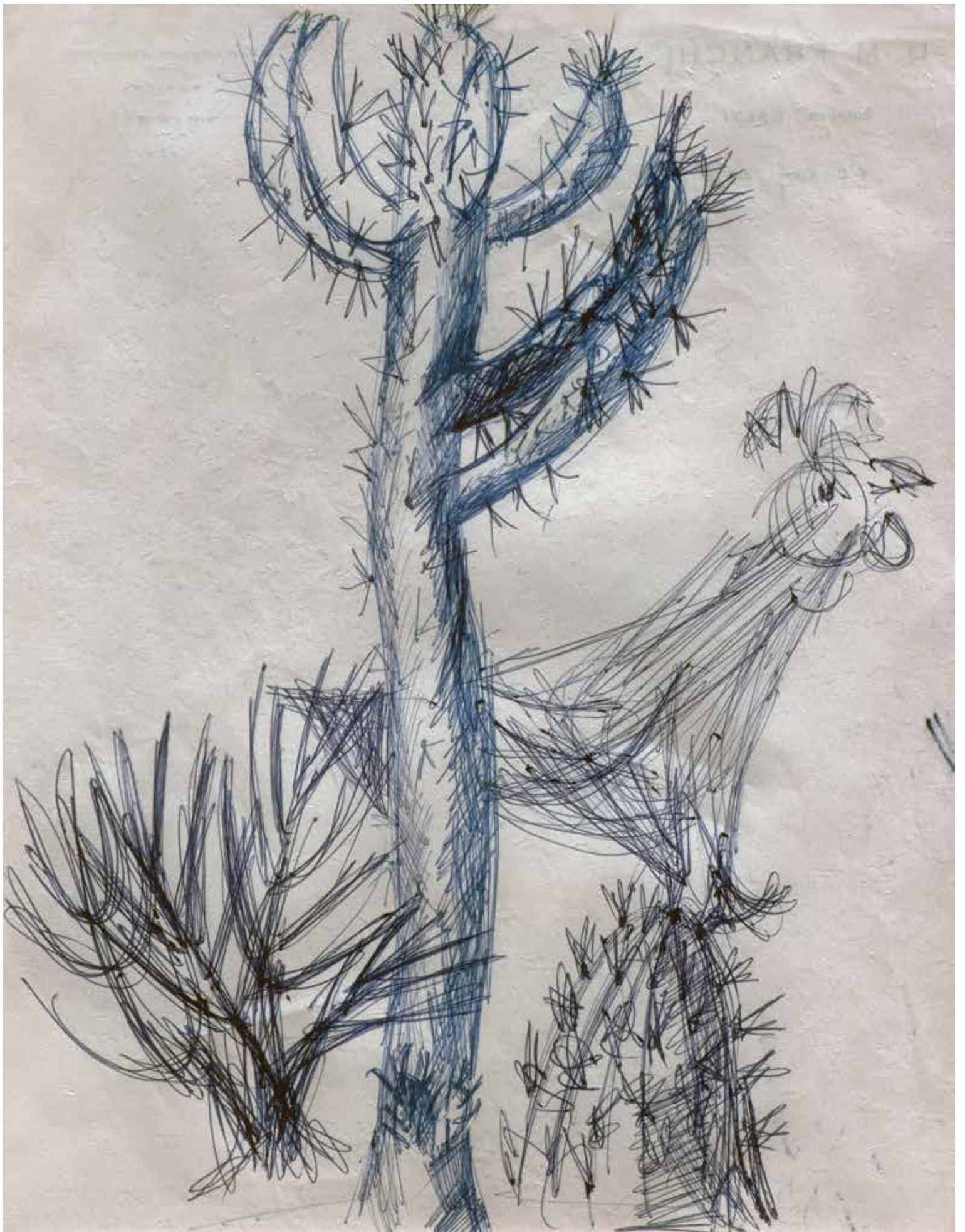
S.H. Raza's artistic legacy continues to resonate with audiences today. His profound exploration of spirituality, coupled with his mastery of color and form, makes him one of India's most celebrated modern artists. Raza's paintings evoke a sense of transcendence and invite viewers to connect with the deeper dimensions of existence. His contribution to the art world has left an enduring impact, and his artworks continue to inspire and captivate audiences globally.

UNTITLED

Pen & ink on paper

10 x 8 inches

1950's

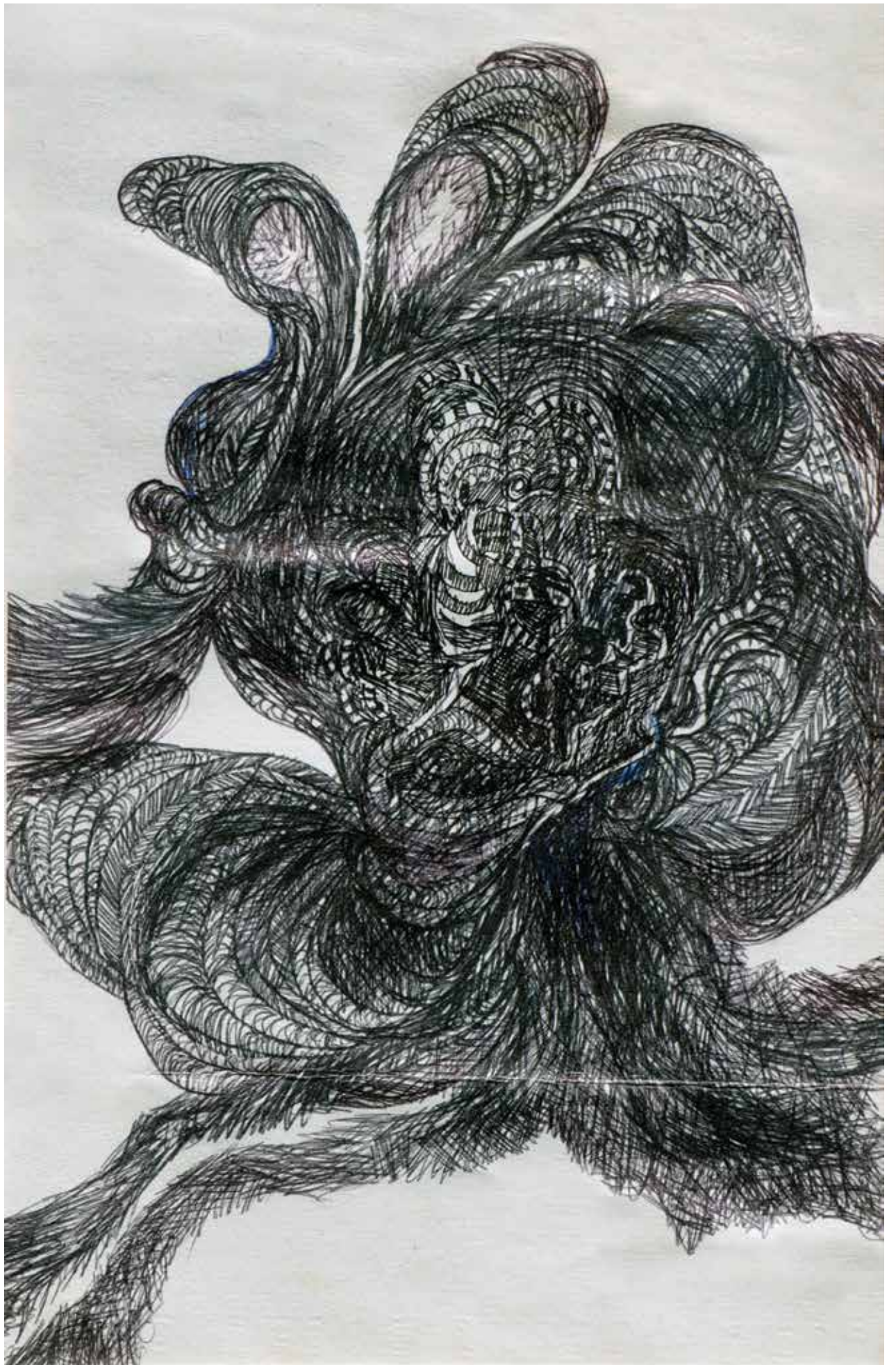


UNTITLED

Pen & ink on paper

10 x 6 inches

1950's



UNTITLED
Pen on paper
11 x 10 inches
1950's





Utriccia.

IN FOREST

Water color on paper

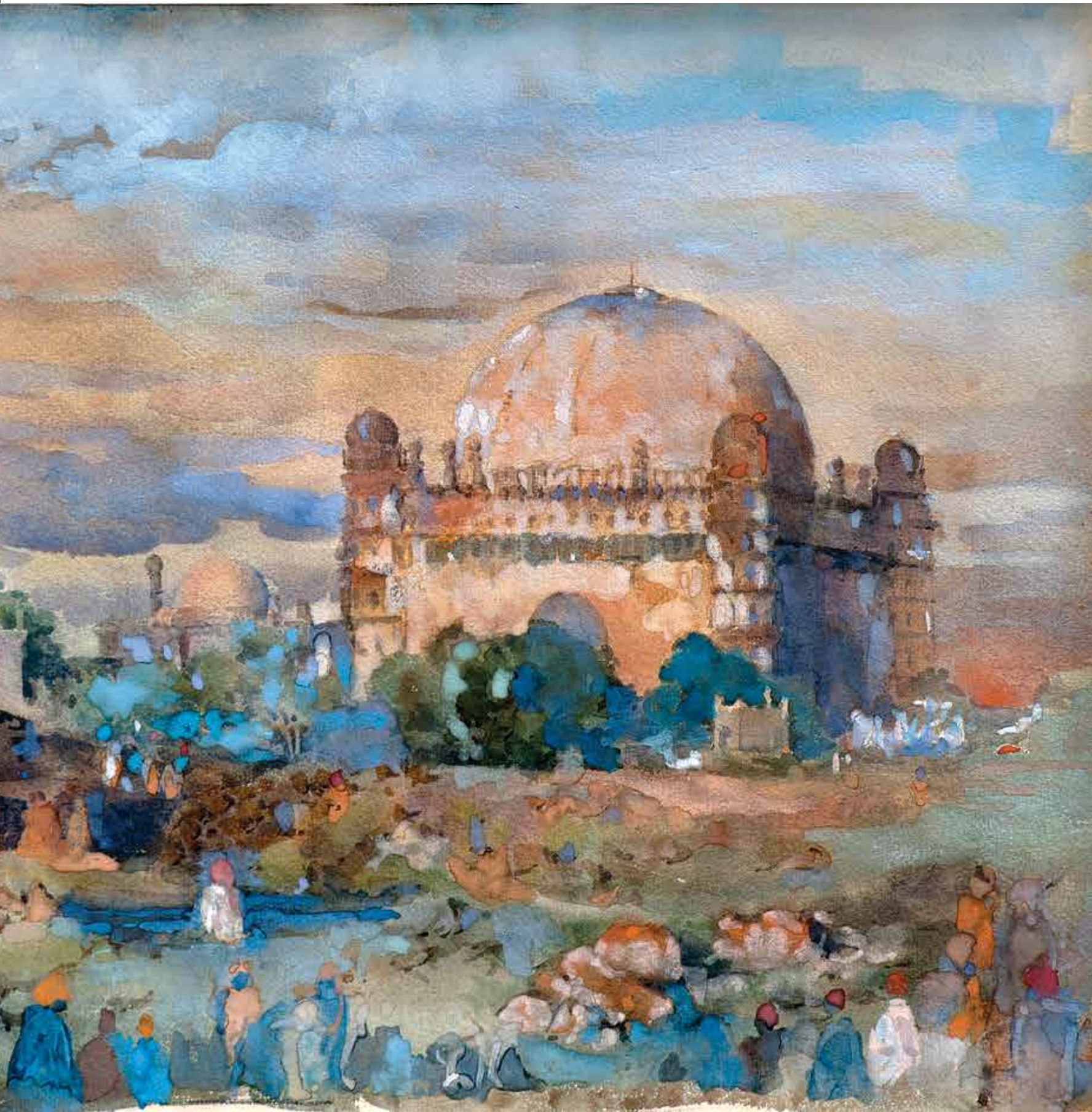
10 x 14 inches

1940's



GOL GUMMAD
Water color on paper
15 x 21.5 inches
1943





VILLAGE

Oil & ink on paper

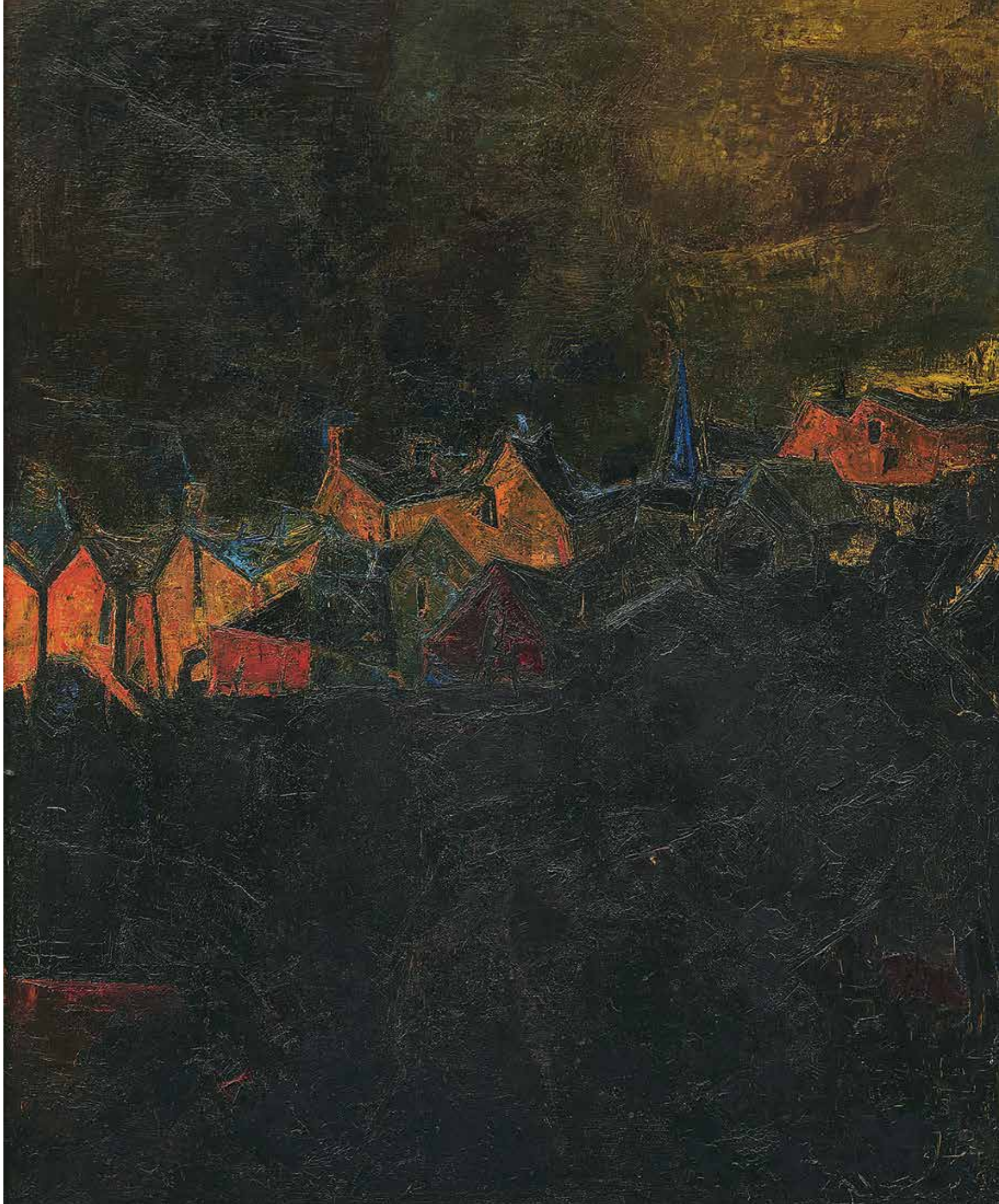
20 x 25 inches

1956



VILLAGE

Oil on board
28 x 23 inches
1955



LE VILLAGE

Oil on canvas

18 x 22 inches

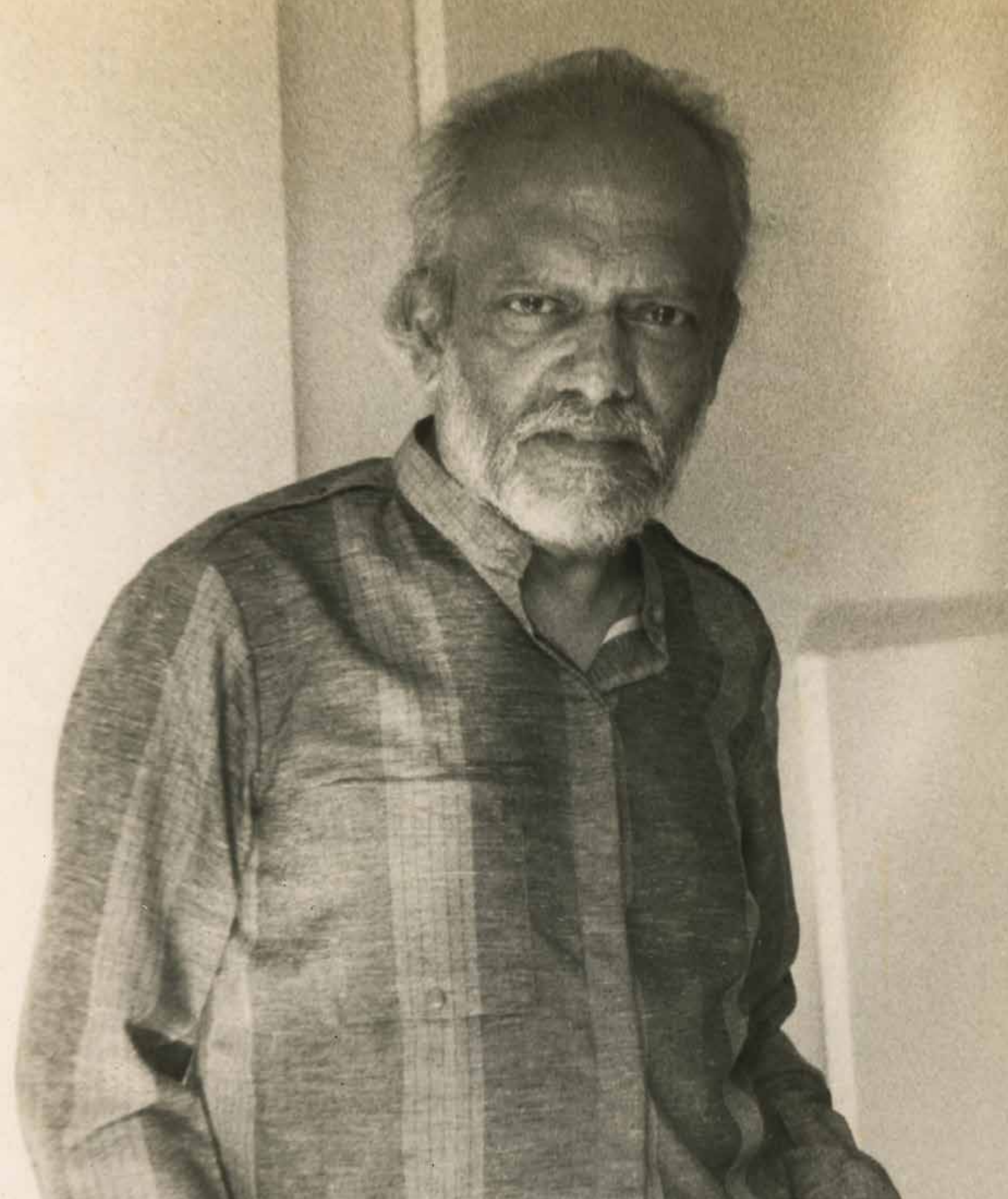
1956



UNTITLED

Acrylic on board
20 x 29.5 inches
1972





FRANCIS NEWTON SOUZA

(April 1924 – March 2002)

Francis Newton Souza, commonly known as F.N. Souza, was an influential and trailblazing Indian artist whose work challenged conventions and left an indelible impact on the art world. Born in 1924 in Saligao, Goa, Souza's artistic journey was marked by a relentless pursuit of creative expression and a unique visual language.

Souza's style was characterized by bold, expressive lines, vibrant colors, and a raw intensity. His paintings often depicted distorted human figures, religious iconography, and socio-political commentary. His works reflected a deep exploration of the human condition, addressing themes of identity, sexuality, spirituality, and the complexities of life.

As a co-founder of the Progressive Artists' Group in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1947, Souza played a pivotal role in ushering in a new wave of modernism in Indian art. The group aimed to break away from traditional and academic art forms and embrace a more experimental and contemporary approach. Souza's artistic vision and contributions were instrumental in challenging the prevailing artistic norms and encouraging a bolder and more progressive art movement in India.

Souza's talent and impact were recognized globally. He exhibited his works extensively in India and abroad, including in London, New York, and Paris. His paintings commanded high prices at auctions, attesting to their artistic significance and appeal. Souza's artistic achievements were acknowledged through numerous awards and accolades, including the Guggenheim International Award in 1967.

While Souza's artistic career was marked by success, he faced his share of controversies. His provocative and daring subject matter often stirred debates and drew criticism. However, these controversies did not deter him from pushing the boundaries of artistic expression and pursuing his creative vision.

F.N. Souza's artistic legacy continues to inspire and captivate audiences today. His bold and uncompromising approach to art, coupled with his ability to evoke emotion and provoke thought, solidifies his status as one of India's most influential modern artists. Souza's contributions have left an indelible mark on the art world, and his unique artistic language continues to resonate with audiences, challenging perceptions and inspiring generations of artists to come.

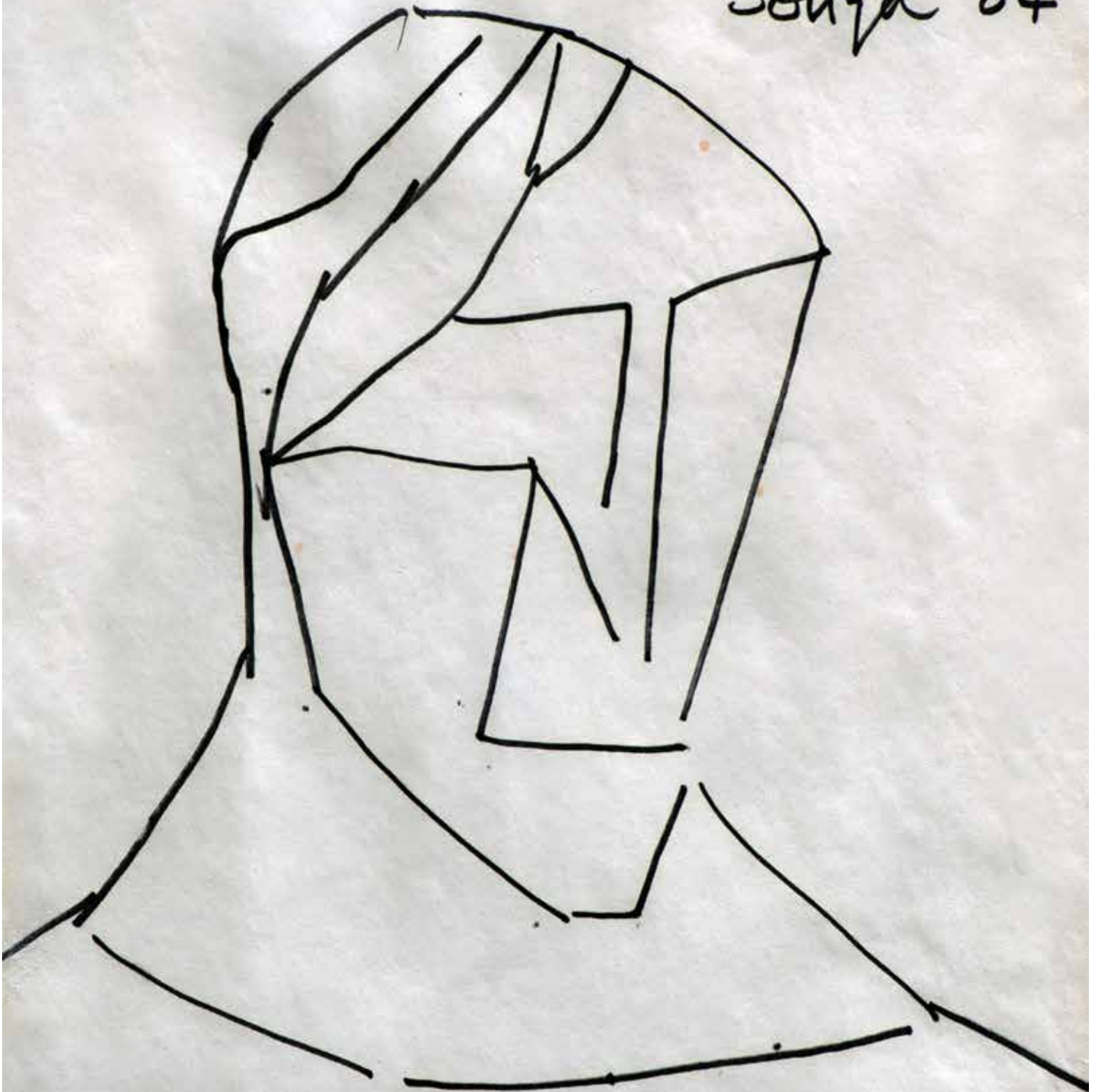
UNTITLED

Sketch on paper

11 x 9 inches

1984

Souza 84

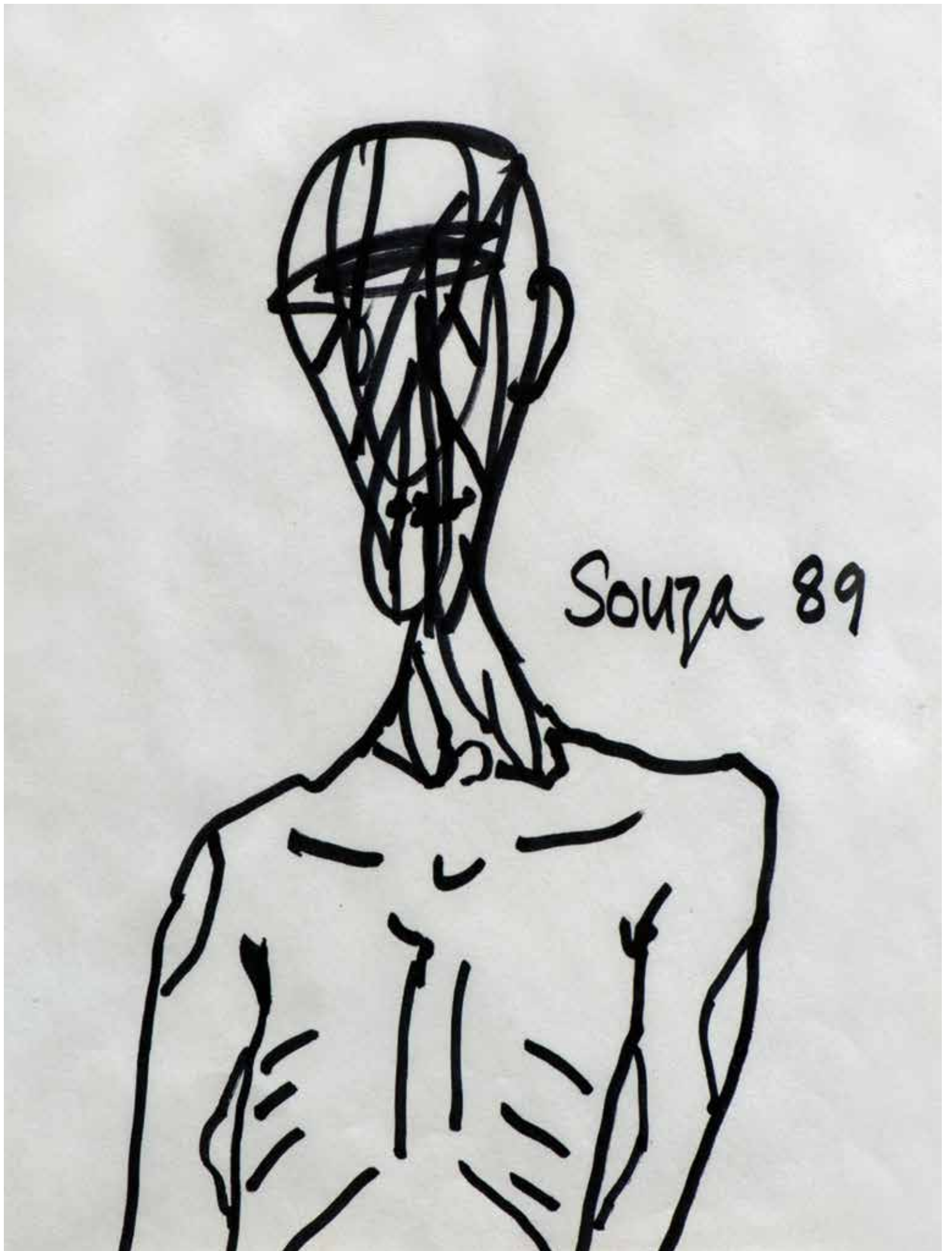


UNTITLED

Sketch on paper

11 x 9 inches

1989



Souza 89

UNTITLED

Sketch on paper

11x 9 inches

1989

Souza 89



GOAN PEASANTS IN THE MARKET

Gouache on paper

14 x 20 inches

1944



THE CASTLE

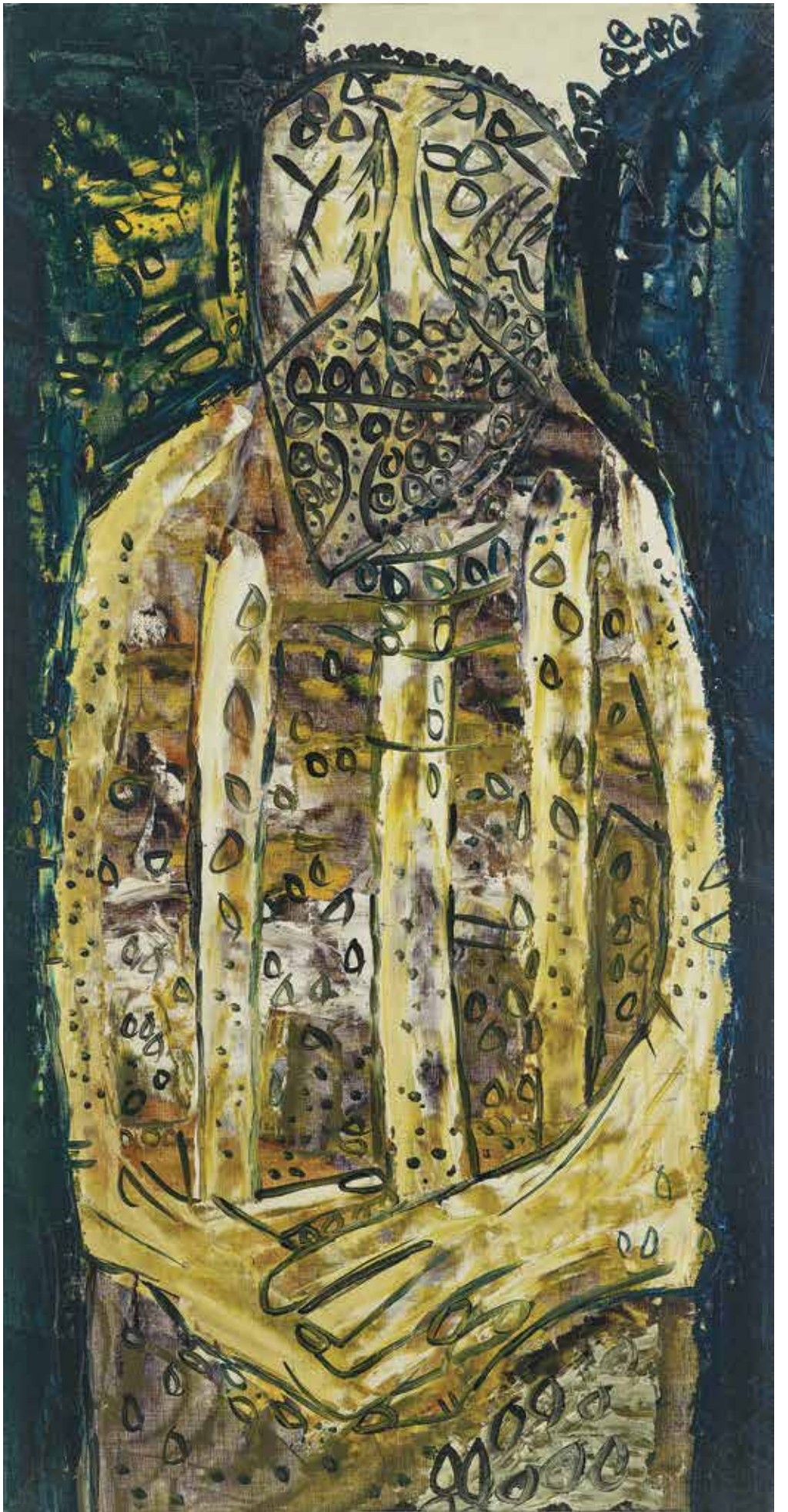
Oil on board
48 x 30 inches
1957

50017177



UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
41 x 21 inches
1963



HAMPSTEAD TERRACES

Oil on canvas

24 x 30 inches

1964





KRISHNAJI HOWLAJI ARA

(April 1914 – June 1985)

K.H. Ara, whose full name was Krishnaji Howlaji Ara, was a prominent Indian artist known for his contributions to the modern Indian art movement. Born on October 15, 1914, in Maharashtra, India, Ara's artistic journey spanned several decades, leaving an indelible mark on the art scene of his time.

Ara's artistic style was deeply influenced by the vibrant colors and rich culture of his homeland. He was one of the founding members of the Progressive Artists' Group, a collective of artists who sought to break away from traditional art forms and explore new artistic expressions. Ara, along with his contemporaries, embraced modernism and experimented with various techniques and mediums.

One of Ara's notable contributions was his unique portrayal of the female form. His paintings celebrated the beauty and grace of women, often depicting them in bold, confident poses. His use of vibrant colors and fluid brushstrokes added a sense of dynamism to his works, capturing the essence of his subjects with great depth and emotion.

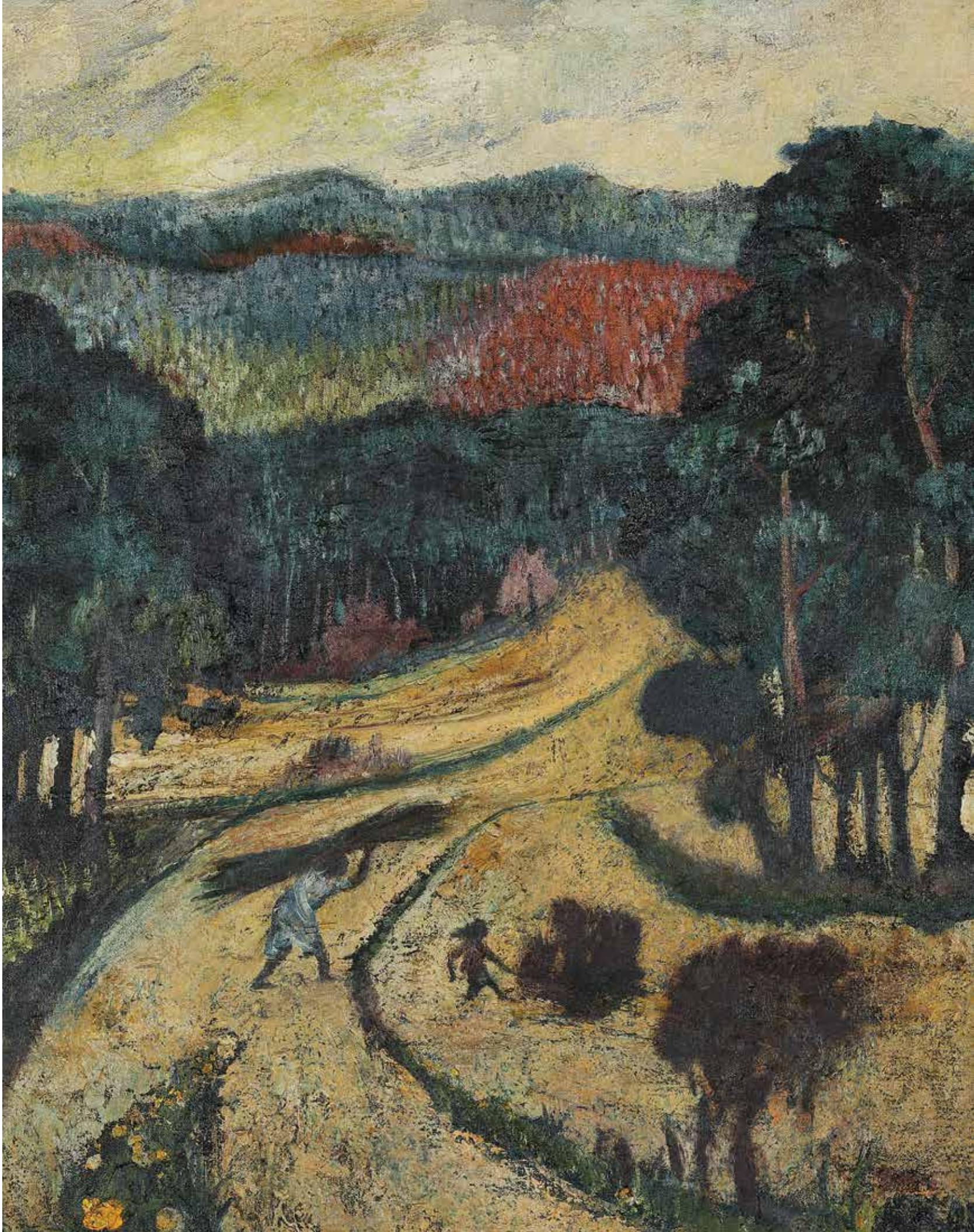
Ara's oeuvre also included landscapes and still-life paintings, where he showcased his mastery of composition and use of light and shadow. His landscapes often depicted the idyllic countryside, capturing the serene beauty of nature. In his still-life works, he infused everyday objects with a sense of intrigue, breathing life into ordinary subjects.

Throughout his career, Ara received numerous accolades for his artistic prowess. He participated in several exhibitions and art shows both in India and internationally, gaining recognition and critical acclaim. His works have been exhibited in prestigious galleries and museums, preserving his artistic legacy for future generations to appreciate and admire.

K.H. Ara's artistic vision and contributions played a crucial role in shaping the modern Indian art movement. His innovative approach, vibrant palette, and focus on capturing the human form in all its glory continue to inspire artists today. Ara's legacy serves as a testament to the power of art to transcend boundaries and touch the hearts and minds of people around the world.

UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
24 x 18 inches
1940's



UNTITLED

Oil on jute
17 x 23 inches
1950's



UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
30 x 22 inches
1960's



UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
30 x 22 inches
1960's





SADANAND K. BAKRE

(November 1920 – December 2007)

Sadanand K. Bakre, often referred to as S.K. Bakre, was a pioneering Indian sculptor and a significant contributor to modern Indian art. Born in 1920 in Baroda, Gujarat, Bakre's artistic journey unfolded over several decades, leaving an indelible mark on the Indian art scene.

Bakre's sculptures were characterized by their abstract and geometric forms, reflecting his fascination with modernist aesthetics. He explored the interplay of space, form, and material, creating sculptures that were both visually striking and conceptually thought-provoking. Bakre's mastery over various mediums allowed him to experiment with a range of materials, including wood, metal, and stone, bringing his artistic visions to life.

Bakre was part of the Progressive Artists' Group, a collective of influential artists who sought to break away from traditional artistic conventions and introduce a more experimental approach to Indian art. His association with the group played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of modern art in India, and his sculptures were at the forefront of the movement.

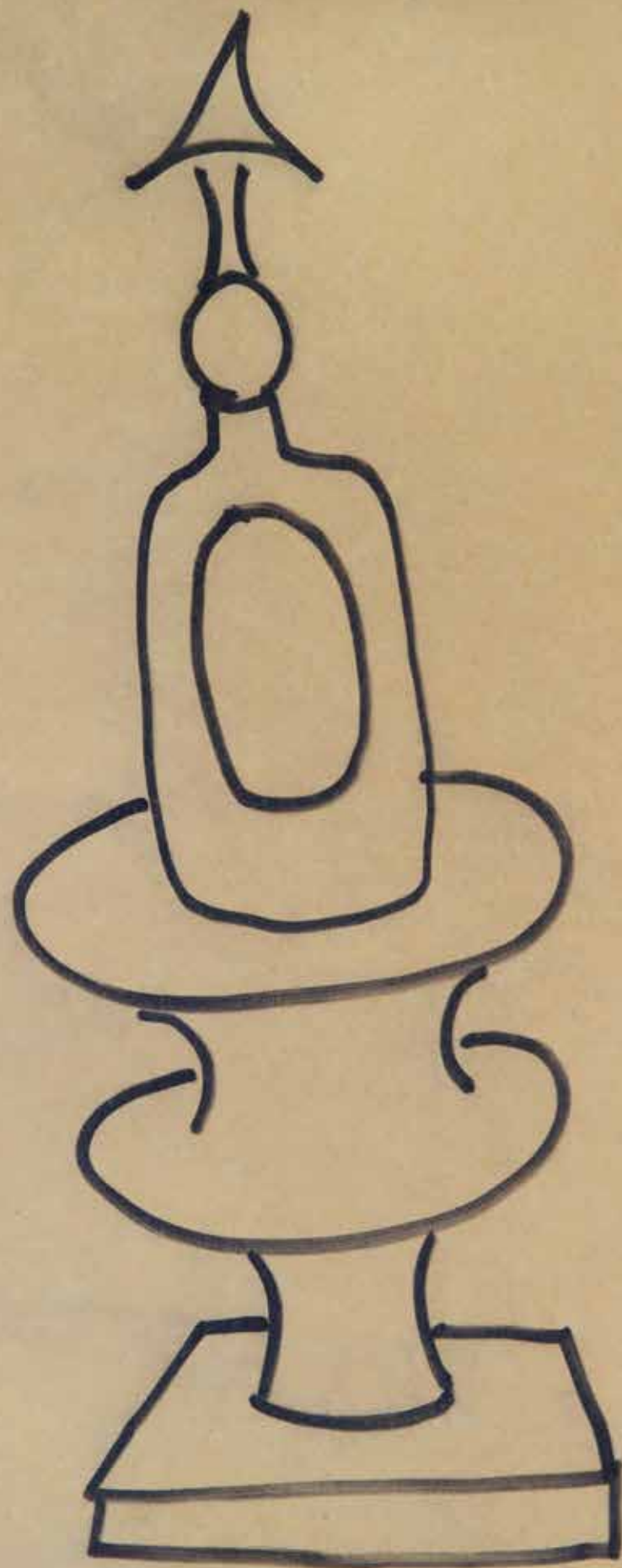
Bakre's works often explored themes of human emotions, social consciousness, and the human condition. He used abstraction as a means to convey his ideas, allowing viewers to engage with the essence of his sculptures on a deeper level. His sculptures were characterized by clean lines, meticulous craftsmanship, and a keen sense of balance, resulting in visually harmonious and evocative pieces.

Despite his significant contributions to the art world, Bakre's work remained relatively less recognized compared to some of his contemporaries. However, his artistic legacy continues to be celebrated and acknowledged by art enthusiasts and scholars alike. Bakre's sculptures are marked by their inherent beauty, intellectual depth, and technical finesse.

Sadanand K. Bakre's impact on modern Indian sculpture is undeniable. His ability to blend abstraction with a profound understanding of form and material showcased his mastery as a sculptor. Bakre's dedication to pushing artistic boundaries, his innovative approach to sculptural expression, and his commitment to modernism make him an important figure in the annals of Indian art history. His sculptures stand as a testament to his artistic vision and continue to inspire and captivate audiences, solidifying his enduring legacy as a pioneering sculptor in India.

UNTITLED

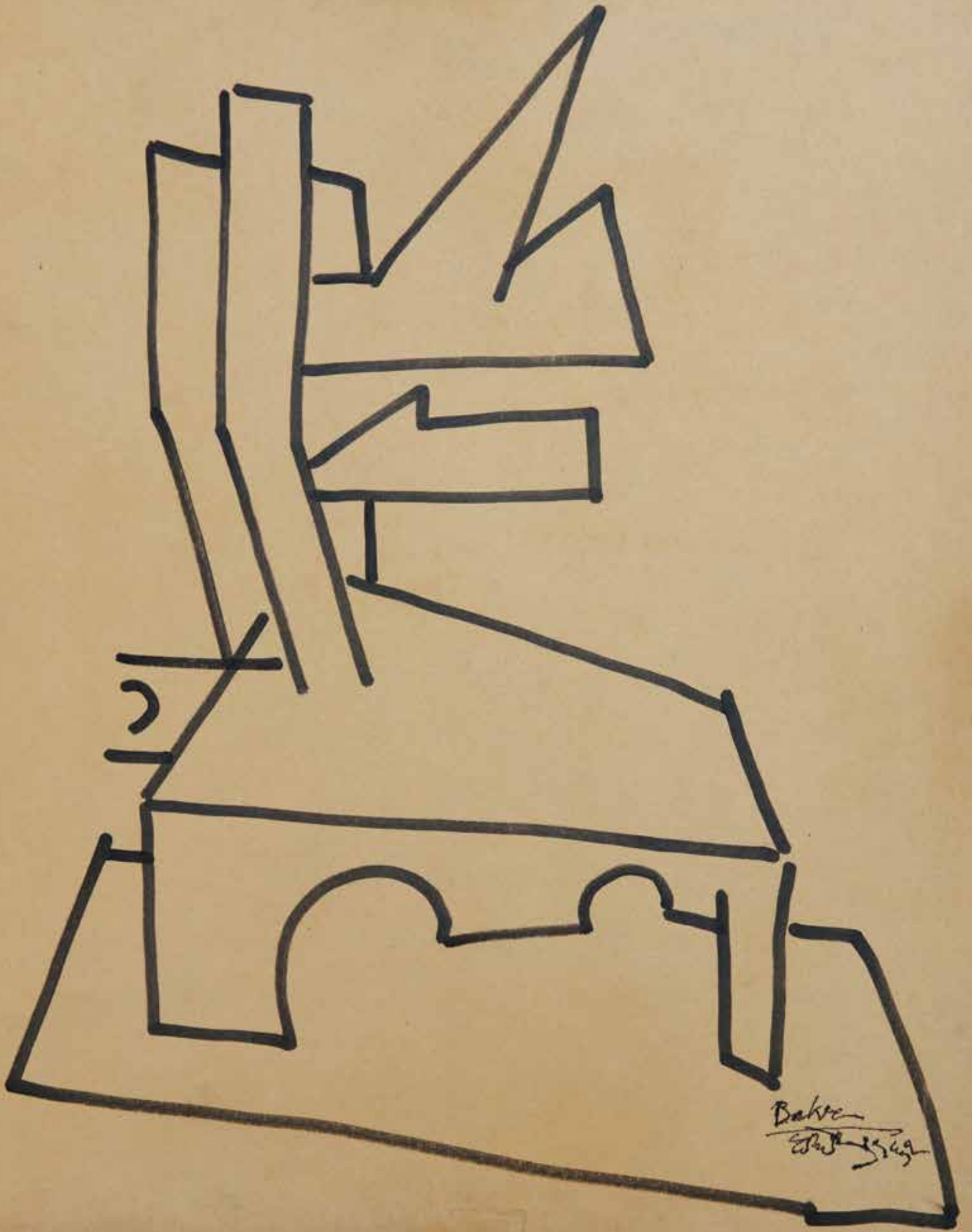
Sketch on paper
12 x 10 inches
1961



Baker
1922

UNTITLED

Sketch on paper
12 x 10 inches
1961



Bakre
E. Bakre

UNTITLED

Sketch on paper

12 x 10

1961



Baker
1959

Sunny day in London

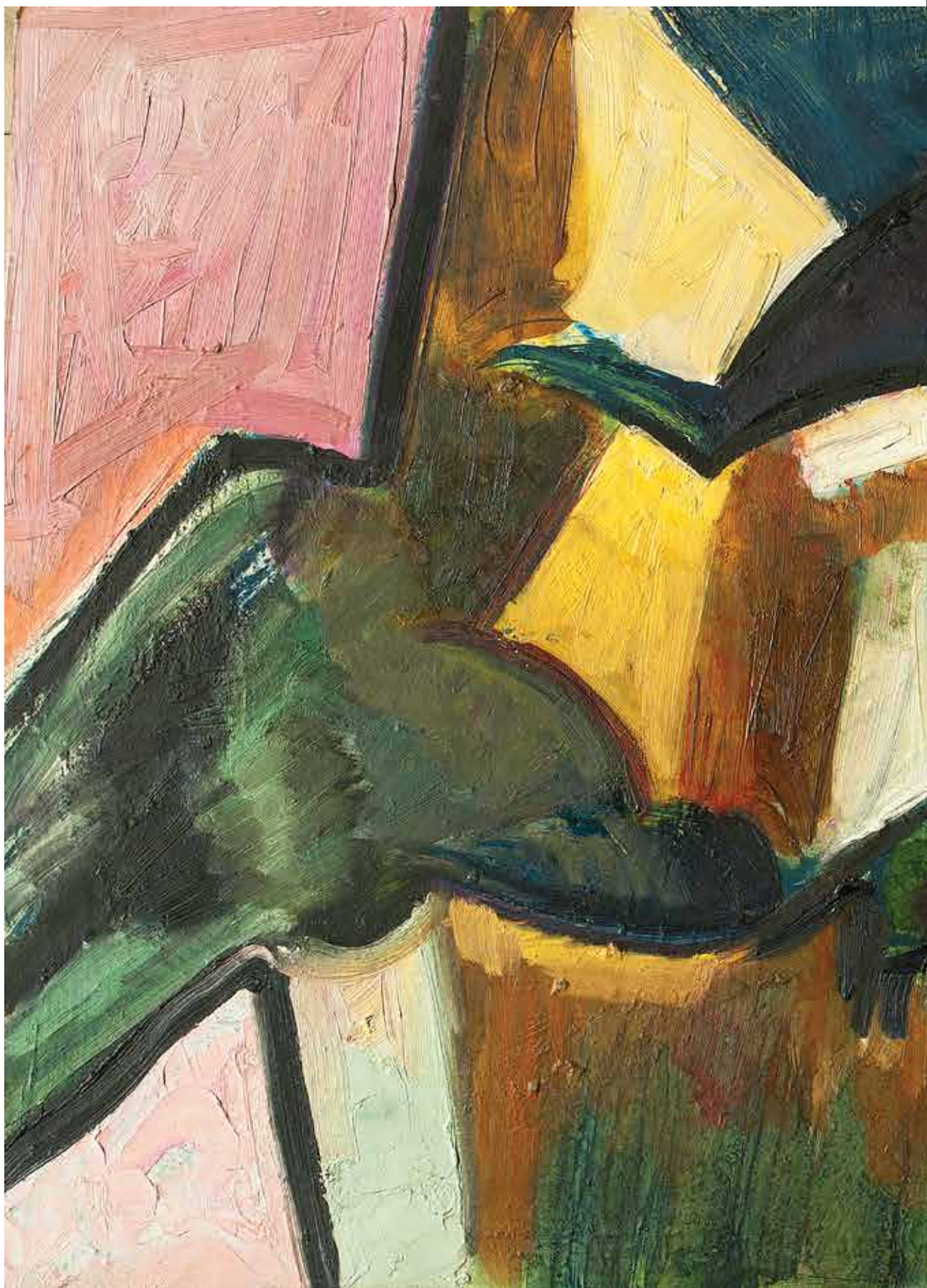
Oil on Canvas

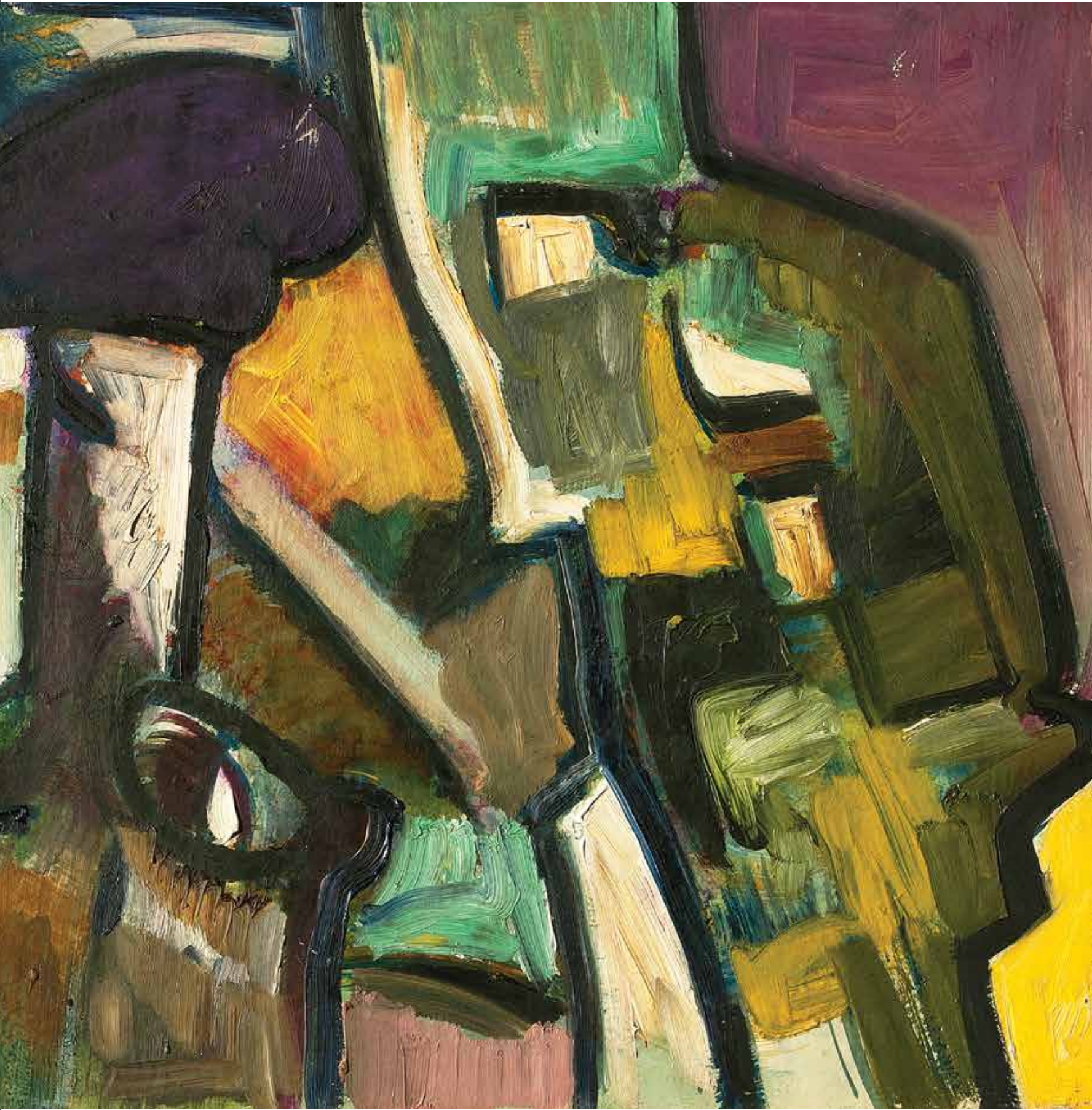
16 x 20 inches

1958



UNTITLED
17 x 30 inches
Oil on masonite board
1960





UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
25 x 30 inches
1961



UNTITLED

Oil on masonite board

24 x 30 inches

1963



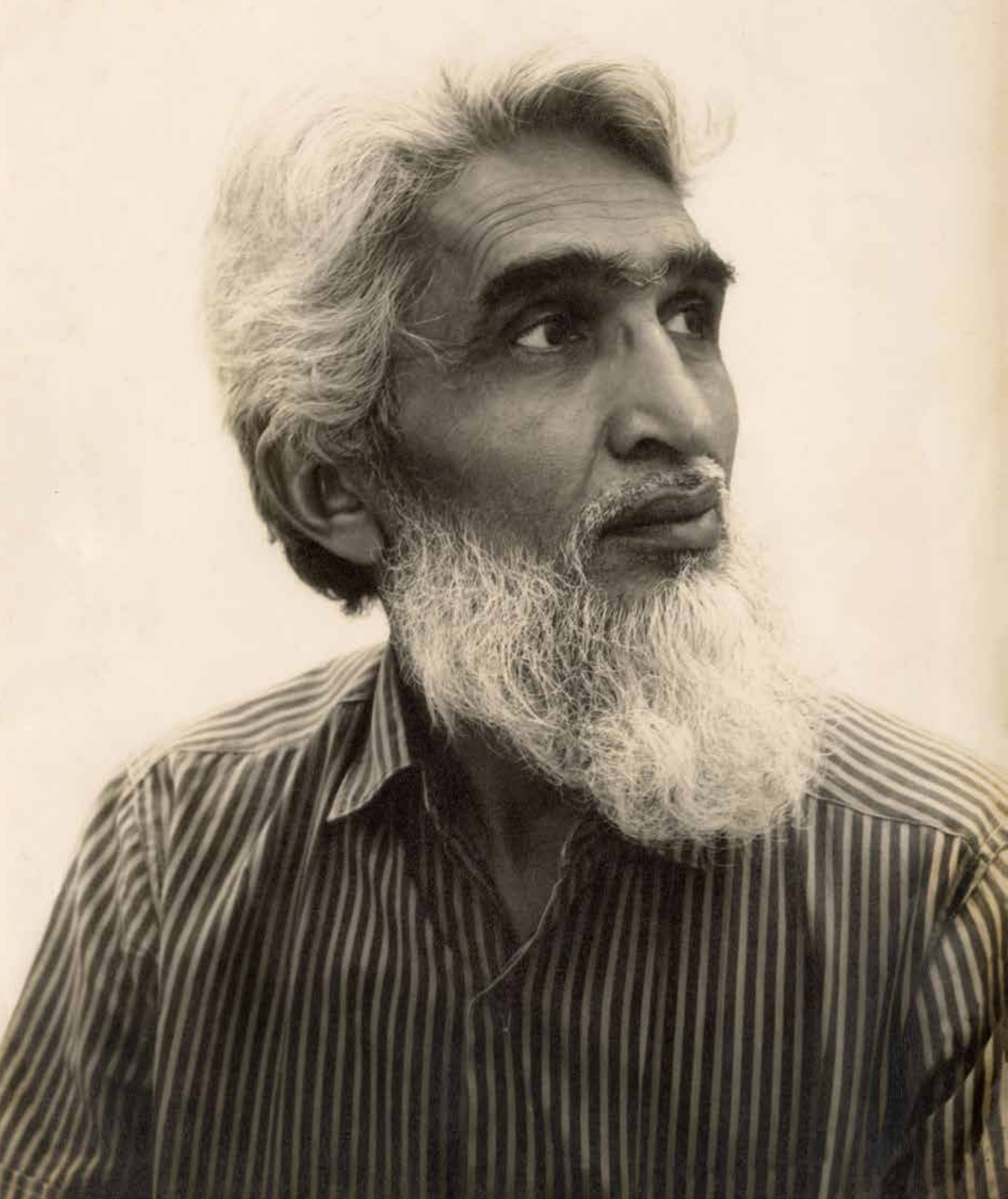
UNTITLED

Oil on masonite

20 x 24 inches

1964





MAQBOOL FIDA HUSAIN

(September 1915 – June 2011)

Maqbool Fida Husain, popularly known as M.F. Husain, was a legendary and controversial Indian artist who revolutionized the art scene in India. Born in 1915 in Pandharpur, Maharashtra, Husain's artistic journey spanned over seven decades and left an indelible mark on the world of modern Indian art.

Husain was a self-taught artist who developed a distinctive style characterized by bold, fluid brushstrokes and vibrant colors. His paintings reflected a deep connection with Indian culture, mythology, and history. He had a remarkable ability to capture the essence and spirit of his subjects, be it Hindu deities, rural landscapes, or iconic figures like Mahatma Gandhi.

Husain's artistic genius garnered him immense recognition both in India and internationally. He exhibited his works in prestigious galleries and museums worldwide, including the Tate Modern in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His paintings fetched record-breaking prices at auctions, solidifying his position as one of the most celebrated and sought-after artists of his time.

However, Husain's artistic journey was not without controversy. His unorthodox portrayals of Hindu deities and goddesses stirred controversy and triggered strong reactions from conservative groups. He faced legal cases, threats, and protests, which eventually forced him to live in self-imposed exile in his later years.

Despite the controversies surrounding him, Husain's contributions to Indian art are immeasurable. He received numerous accolades and honors, including the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan, two of India's highest civilian awards. His paintings continue to be revered for their artistic brilliance, cultural significance, and the unique perspective he brought to the world of art.

M.F. Husain's legacy as a visionary artist remains intact. His ability to blend traditional Indian art forms with modern sensibilities, his relentless pursuit of artistic expression, and his profound impact on the art world have secured his place as one of India's greatest artists. His paintings continue to inspire and captivate audiences, ensuring that his artistic legacy will endure for generations to come.

UNTITLED
Ink on paper
7 x 9 inches
1950's



UNTITLED

Ink on paper
7 x 9 inches
1950's



UNTITLED

Pen & ink on paper

7 x 9 inches

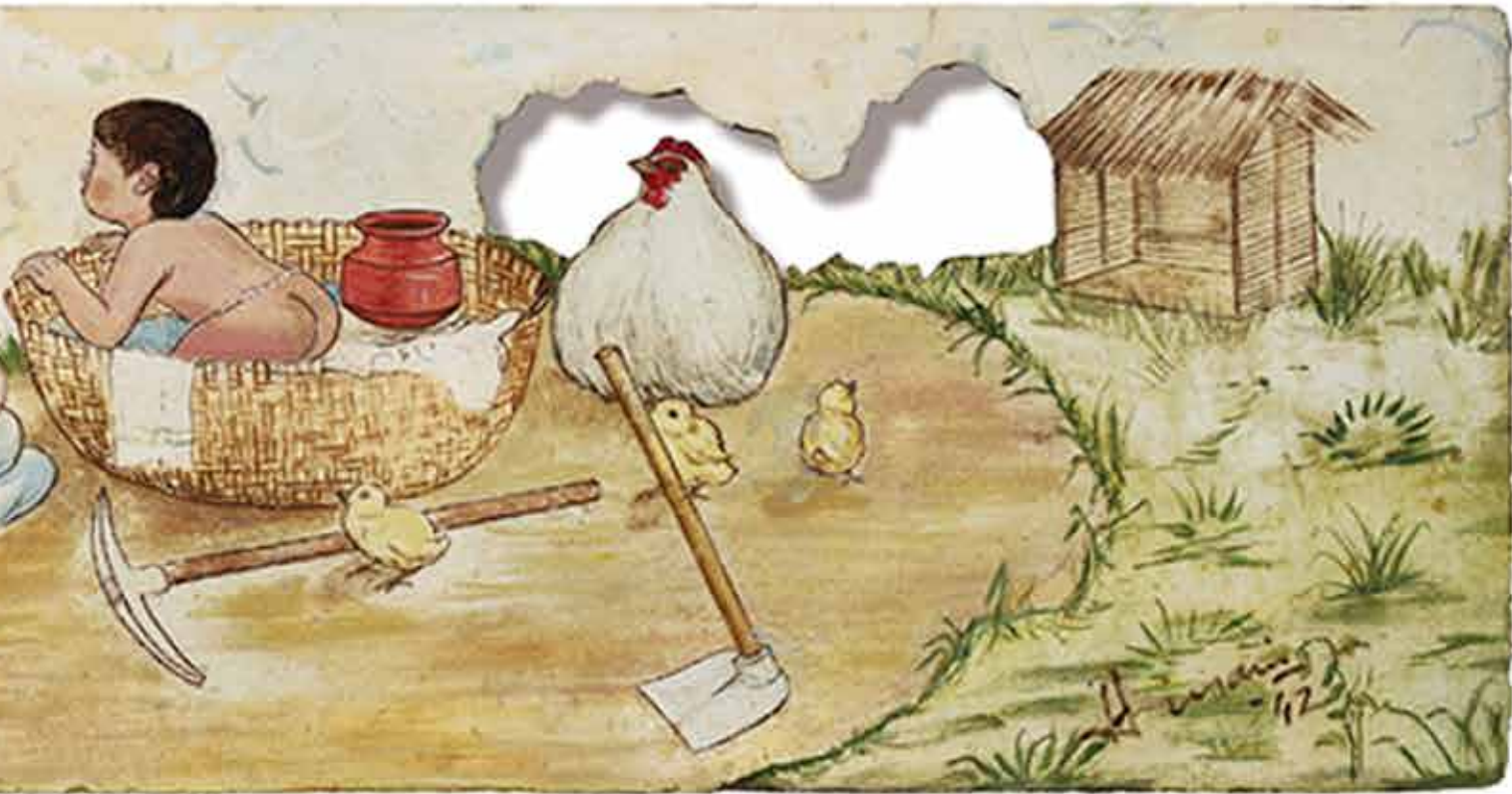
1950's





UNTITLED

Oil on woodcut
9 x 36 inches
1942



SAWARI

Oil on wood
20 x 16 inches
1950's



APSARAS

Painted Wood Pasted on Board

18 x 18 inches

1950's



DHOLAK

Painted Wood Pasted on Board

18 x 12 inches

1950's



UNTITLED

Oil on wood

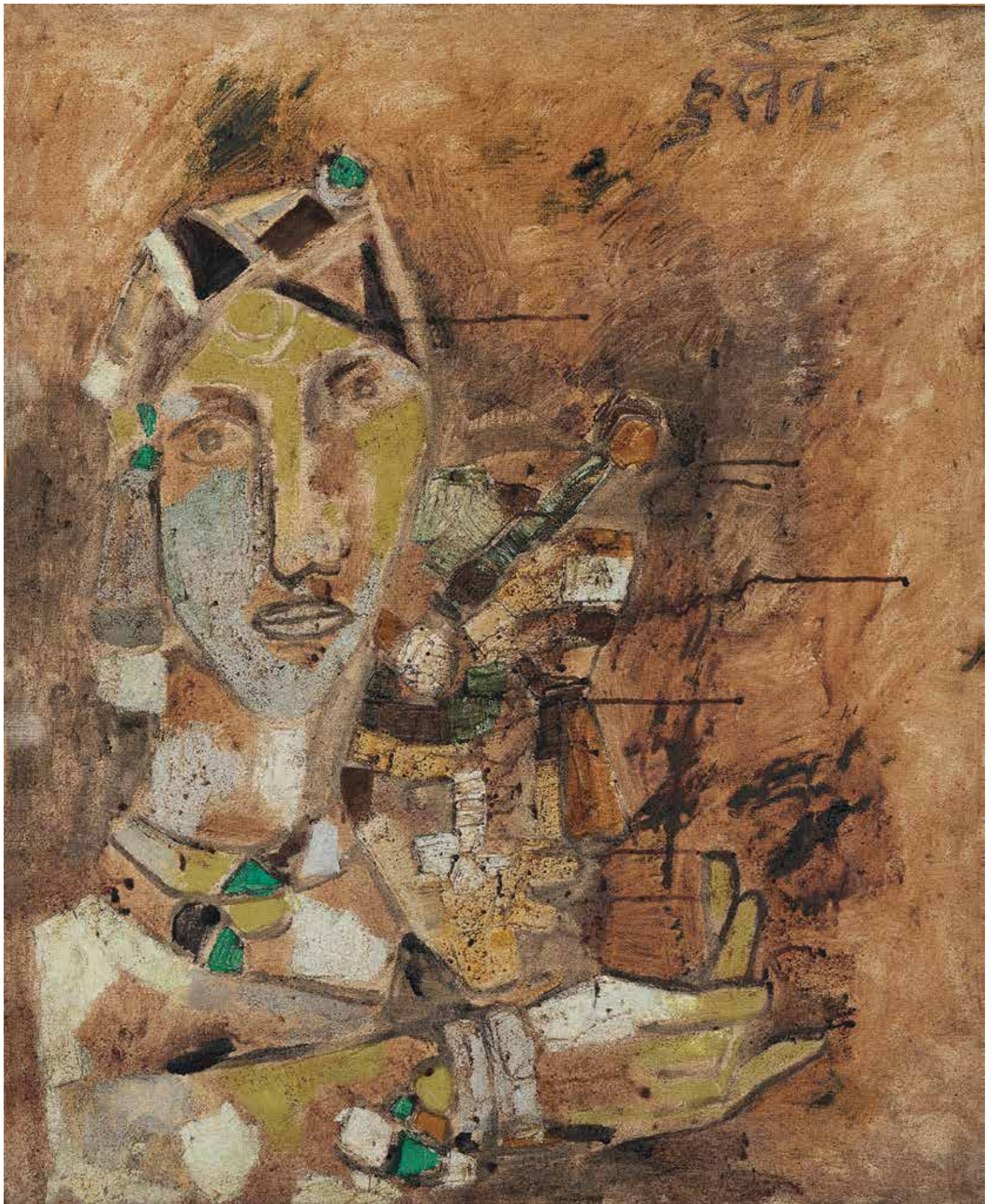
26 x 26 x 9 inches

1980



UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
33 x 27 inches
1950's



MEHNDI

Oil on canvas

36 x 24 inches

1962



UNTITLED
Oil on canvas
20 x 40 inches
1960's





FOLIAGE

Oil on canvas
36 x 48 inches
1970's



MADHURI MCBULL FILMSTRIP NO. 4

Acrylic on acrylic sheet

92 x 40 inches

1992



PRINCESS NISHA RAJE AFTERNOON TEA WITH LADY MCBULL

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 72 inches

1997



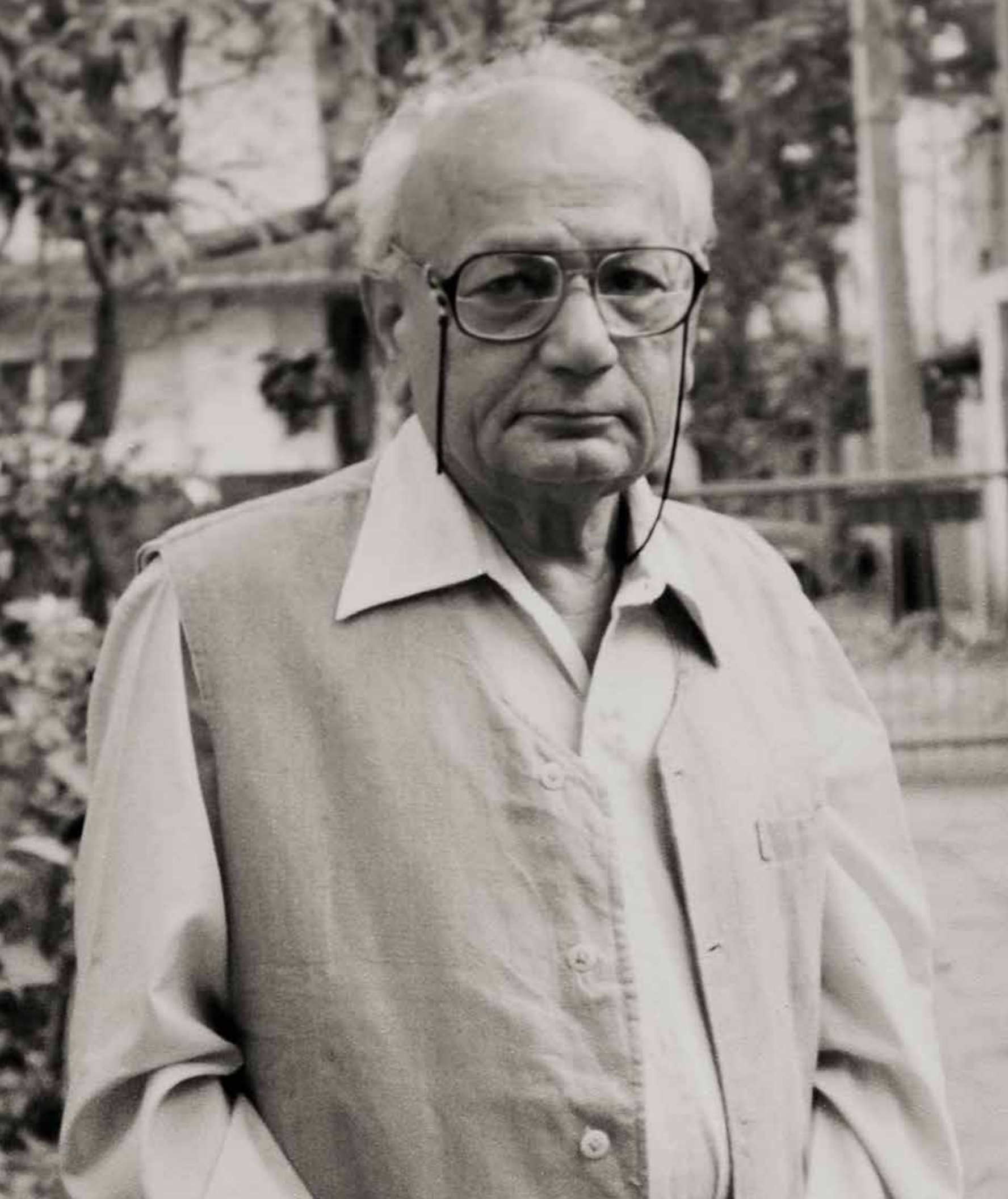
THE LAST SUPPER

Oil on canvas

72 x 96 inches

2005





HARI AMBADAS GADE

(August 1917 – December 2001)

Hari Ambadas Gade is considered one of the first abstract expressionist painters of post-independence India. One of the founders of the progressive art movement in India, he believed in an unconventional and dynamic artistic style. Like all the painters of the Progressive Artists Group, Gade revolted against the traditions of academic art, which the British education system had clamped on Indian art education.

Born in Amravati on, 1917, he graduated in science from the University of Nagpur, Maharashtra in 1938. He says, “When I was a child I was fond of drawing. But I also had a compelling interest in science and mathematics. I therefore went on to qualify for the master’s degree in Science.” Since he couldn’t find a job, Gade joined a school as a teacher. It was in Jabalpur, where he went for his Bachelor of Educator examinations, that the artist began painting landscapes.

He also read books like ‘How To Paint Water Colors’ and ‘Vision Design’ by Roger Fry. In 1946, Gade submitted two of his paintings at a national exhibition in Nagpur. One of them, an old man with a white flowing beard, won a prize, and the artist joined the Nagpur School of Art as a student and from where he took a Diploma in Art in 1949, and later, a master’s degree (1950).

It was around this time that Gade came in touch with artist S H Raza, whose watercolors echoed the style of his mentor Walter Langhammer, then the art critic at ‘The Times of India’. Raza gave him a lot of advice on painting landscapes. Gade began by painting watercolors, but he later switched to oils on canvas. He used both the palette knife and brush in his paintings. Art critic Prakash Bhise, in his essay on the Progressive Art Movement says of Gade, “His art stands on a firm intellectual platform. In his works, color is of importance, form is only incidental.”

The artist, who began by painting beautiful landscapes, was strongly affected by the ugly slums that had sprung up across Mumbai in the 1950s. In his paintings, this abject poverty and dirty slums crop up once in a while. Yet, he did not abandon his first love, landscapes, and would travel every few months. From the lush greenery of Kerala, to the stark landscape of Udaipur to the dense forests, his landscapes are highly prized. In the recent past, he did a series on rains and monsoon greens.

Gade first exhibited in Mumbai in 1947, and then in 1948, at the annual exhibition of the Bombay Art Society. In 1949, he was invited to exhibit at the Salon-de-Mai in Paris, and in the same year, he also showed his works at Stanford University. In 1954, Gade’s paintings were exhibited at the Venice Biennale.

H A Gade passed away in the year 2001.

UNTITLED

Oil on board
20 x 24 inches
1950's



UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
14 x 23 inches
1960's



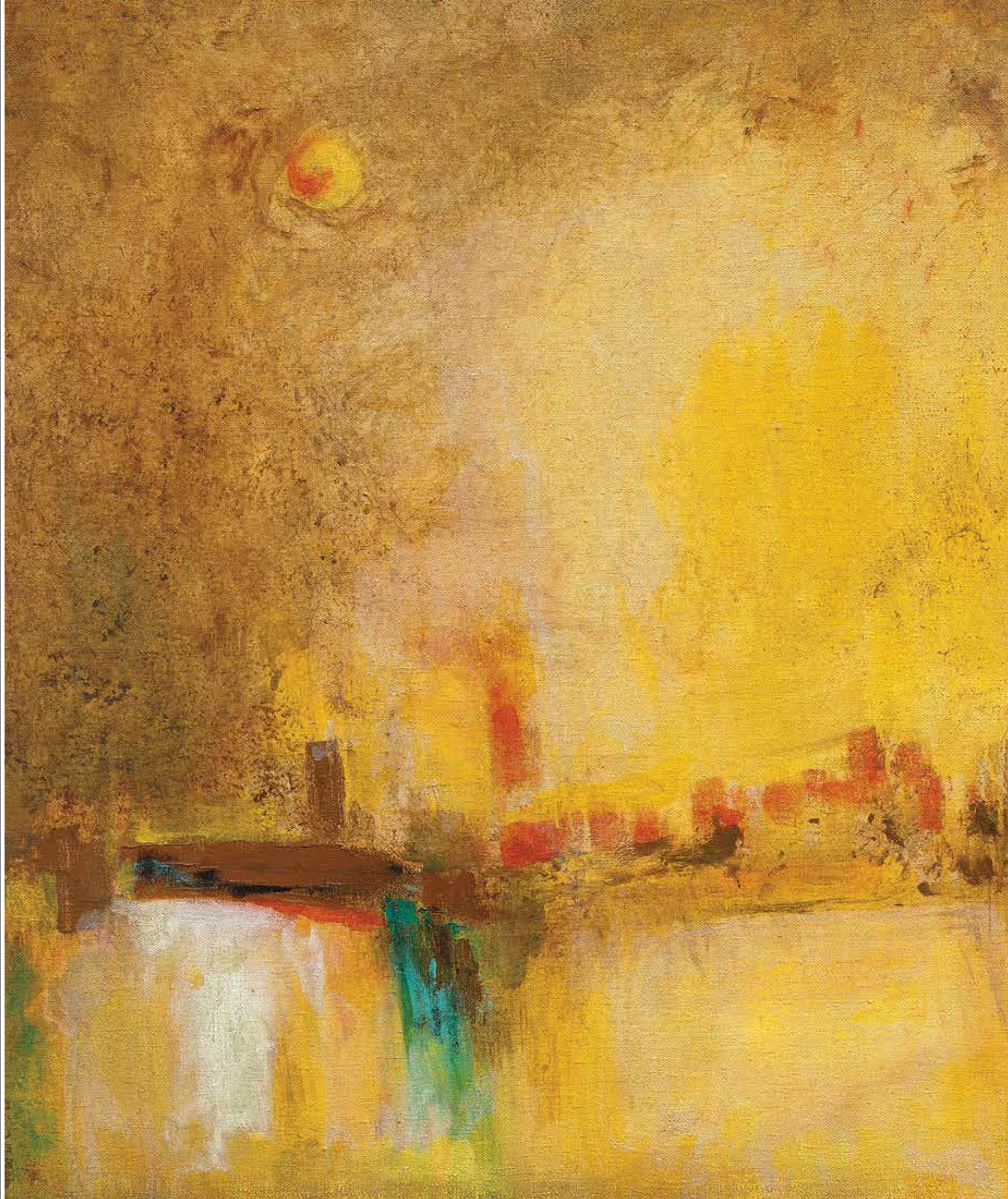
UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
27.5 x 33.5 inches
1970's



UNTITLED

Oil on canvas
24 x 20 inches
1980's





PYG

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